

**Men Playing (at) Women:  
Categorical Consequences of Cross-Dressing  
on the Early Modern English Stage**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Auburn University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama  
December 8, 2012

Keywords: early modern English theatrical practices, cross-dressing,  
transvestism, queer studies, Shakespeare

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## Abstract

Early modern English stage customs normalized the practice of cross-dressing boy actors to play female characters; the boys who portrayed female characters demonstrated the performativity of gender as an act that can be embodied by anyone, regardless of “true” gender identity. These performances were further fractured when the boy actors portrayed cross-dressing female characters, reflecting back to the early modern hegemony its own gender ideologies, categories, assumptions, and prescriptions. The boy actors were expected to portray both the female characters as well as the hegemonic presumption of the female perception of masculinity when those female characters crossed gender boundary lines. These performances indicated the categories within which all early modern individuals were expected to identify their own genders and sexes. The categories were not limited to the stage, however; in fact, those individuals whose genders or sexes were not easily categorized (as either masculine or feminine, or as male or female) because of physical appearance (in the case of hermaphrodites) or preference in expression (in the case of cross-dressers) were relegated to exist on the fringe of social acceptance as individuals with a gender or sex identity. In some cases, these outcasts faced cruel forms of domination by hegemonic rule, either through imprisonment or even execution, should they reject the identity and expression assigned to them. While these categories strengthened and solidified under socioreligious hegemonic heteronormativity, individual identities struggled against categorical

impositions and prescribed gender performances. Cross-dressing characters in plays by Shakespeare (*As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Merchant of Venice*), Dekker and Middleton (*The Roaring Girl*), and Beaumont and Fletcher (*Love's Cure*) indicate moments when gender and sex identities become crisis points for characters, particularly in times of sexual attraction and desire. Rigid categories continue to exist in spite of this struggle, revealing a constant crisis of comparison between one's quest for an "authentic" identity and the socially-prescribed identity that relies upon masculine-feminine dichotomy.

## Acknowledgements

To my committee: Dr. Constance Relihan, Dr. Anna Bertolet, and Dr. Marc Silverstein. I don't believe I could have chosen three better professors to guide my graduate career, and particularly this dissertation. Thank you for your continued instruction, patience, support, and encouragement through all these years.

To my parents and sister: you have been with me every step of the way. Thank you for trudging along beside me when I needed support, for allowing me to run ahead when I needed independence, and for coaching me through the moments when I wanted to stop. You cannot know how much I needed you throughout this process and how grateful I am that you were at the ready when I called (and even when I didn't). We did it!

To my family, especially Jennifer Abney, and Laurie and Bill Haberstroh: I know I can rely upon you to help me find the silver lining on the gloomiest clouds. Your optimism and support helped carry me through the more challenging days and gave me wings on the victorious ones. Thank you for helping me to see a more cheerful possibility.

To my friends, especially Monita Bell, Robin Gosser, and Dr. Amanda Morris: you have always offered unconditional support, guidance, and laughter in the moments when I have needed them most. You have been the ideal consultants and guides through this process. You have also been my sources of relaxation and entertainment on more than one occasion, giving me the opportunity to take breaks without guilt. Thank you for knowing when to push and when to comfort me.

To Victoria Lisle: words cannot express how integral you have been both to this endeavor as well as to my personal growth. I could not have chosen a better writing partner to go through this process with, and I believe very deeply that you hold a great deal of responsibility in kick-starting my work on this dissertation in the first place. You kept me on track, focused, and goal-oriented. Thank you for challenging me, for laughing with me, for everything. Your friendship blesses me and enriches my life.

To my husband, Robert, and my daughter, Melanie Lynn: for absolutely everything. Robert, you have given me unfaltering support, encouragement, and feedback every day. Melanie, you give my life purpose and meaning—I finished this difficult process because of you. When you are older, you will understand. My vocabulary falls short of articulating how deeply I love you both. You are the two most wonderful, most beautiful, most brightly shining points of my life. This is for you.

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## **Introduction**

### **Masked Masculinities**

The “force” of ontology today, a desire to complete the phrase “I am,” finds roots in the early modern period when such matters seemed utterly pressing. In early modern England, individuals wore their (socially-prescribed) identities literally on their sleeves. Determined by socioeconomic status, one’s apparel could be stately or plain. Simply by observing another person, one could identify the other in order to complete the phrase “you are.” The early modern sumptuary codes enabled immediate identity- and meaning-making with a glance (as long as the object of one’s gaze was properly attired). Rules, categories, expectations, and prescriptions were reinforced by these codes; those who transgressed outside of the codes faced judgment as they defied economic boundaries (perhaps they dressed too finely), religious boundaries (perhaps their apparel belied a wealth with which they were not willing to charitably part), and sexual boundaries (women’s fashion had its masculine edge, even in the early modern period). Even the most cursory glance through a few of Shakespeare’s plays reveals a peculiar fascination with crossing sociosexual boundaries through apparel. The cross-dressed woman, for instance, misrepresents herself as the weaker sex, boldly demonstrating her own sense of masculinity. Shakespeare’s cross-dressed women often, although not exclusively, cross-dressed in order to protect themselves from unwanted sexual advances of unsavory men. The boy actors of the early modern period, too young to portray fathers and soldiers, often wore the gowns of female characters opposite their bearded male companions. What the English took for granted,

Shakespeare and his contemporaries called attention to: when a female character crosses to dress as a male page, the actor himself ends his sociosexual crossing and returns to the attire meant for his sex. What should be troubling about these crosses (and often crosses-within-crosses) is the social imposition of particular categories to be compared against an arbitrary, yet socially-accepted, norm.

One version of “normal” that was accepted by the early modern English and French medical community, a “normal” that arguably holds some ground even today, borrows from Aristotle’s binary-gender model which determines that an individual can only be *either* masculine or feminine. With no allowance for the combinations of the two genders, this model restricts and controls the ways in which the individuals may self-identify. In fact, early modern ontology does not seem to have invited the individual to retain agency in the study of his or her selfhood. One’s identity was often determined according to one’s relationship with other people (often in socioeconomic terms); when an individual was identified through a sociosexual lens, that individual would have been offered a role to play: husband, wife, mother, father. If the individual found his or her “true” identity, the one he or she may have preferred over the socially-designated one, different from the one awarded him or her, then that difference opens up to be a site of ontological crisis. In the binary-gender model, there are only two options: male or female, masculine or feminine; the genders and sexes are inextricably linked, or should be. Physical males would have been expected to identify as masculine; physical females, feminine. The publication of early modern texts demonstrating some sort of gender crisis, however, suggest that identity-construction was not as simple as merely gazing upon the physical body. Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl*, as well as Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher’s *Love’s Cure*, demonstrate seventeenth-century English fascination with

individuals whose physical sexes and genders do not always align. Dekker and Middleton's Moll Cut-purse, based on the historical cross-dresser Moll Frith, rejects notions of presumed femininity on the basis of her femaleness. Siblings Lucio and Clara, raised as the opposite sex by their mother and father respectively, struggle to refigure their identities within strict sociosexual paradigms. In the case of the latter, love (desire) is the only effective method for realigning these siblings with their "natures." Moll avoids showing an interest in sexual desire, never committing herself to a sexuality in the first place. In the case of Fletcher and Beaumont's characters, heterosexual attraction is what resolves all points of crisis; the same is true in Ambroise Paré's historical account of early modern French hermaphrodites.<sup>1</sup>

Cross-dressing serves as a conceptual intersection for the expressions of one's gender and one's sexuality. This intersection, however, leads to illusory conclusions: although there are moments when gender and sexuality cross with one another, these brief moments should not suggest causal relationships. Clothing as a marker of heterosexuality and sociosexual identity is a construct that certainly predates this millennium—in fact, the origin of this seemingly arbitrary set of standards is unclear, although many societies have implemented strict guidelines by which citizens are expected to dress and behave.<sup>2</sup> Socially speaking, the early moderns viewed their world in terms of recognizing outsiders and others: if not "us," then "them." Women and men

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<sup>1</sup> *The Roaring Girl* and *Love's Cure* are examined in Chapter Four. In his account of hermaphrodites, Paré explains that sexual attraction determined whether a hermaphrodite was given a gown or breeches to wear as either predominantly female or predominantly male. Once a decision was made by the hermaphrodite's community, the consequences of transgression could be dire. Paré is explored in greater detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault criticizes an apparent search for truth and unity in the look backward through history, arguing that in terms of philosophical development, "...it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath..." ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 82). He explains that "the search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (82). In this way, then, the pursuit of historical mapping serves as a method for exposing sociological differences and temporal fractures. Delving deeper into the study of cross-dressing and its indications of sexualities and genders reveals that history itself is fractured, rousing to the fore the tensions within the fractured spaces and acknowledging that, indeed, these tensions exist in spite and because of social and religious attempts to somehow bridge the very fractures themselves.



are different because (according to Aristotle) they necessarily are, or because (according to Galen) women are merely inverse men.<sup>3</sup> Cross-dressers intentionally and forcibly stood in contrast to the early modern assumptions of gender identity. More to the point, early moderns sought categorization of genders and sexualities into groups based upon what was “normal” or “abnormal.” The “normal” grouping fell in line with religious documents that determined a divine intent for male and female sexual desire: procreation. Strict heterosexuality, with no deviation, became the standard for early modern hegemonic discourse: heteronormativity, then, was the goal in the classification and correction of the “abnormal.” Heteronormative discourse suggests that cross-dressers actively seek to locate themselves *within* the normative concept of sexuality: a cross-dressed woman was dangerous because her disguise may reveal a latent homosexuality—dressed as a man, she might seem to want to enter into sexual relationships with other women. According to that view, only men and women could be linked to one another sexually; only the male and the female, the masculine and the feminine, can seek to bond together. Other pairings were simply inconceivable and in need of *correction* (through surgery or wardrobe changes) or *removal* (through exile or even execution). Scholars seeking to understand the early modern phenomenon of / obsession with / anxiety toward cross-dressing (particularly on stage, and particularly in the face of enforced sumptuary codes)<sup>4</sup> must begin by extricating gender and sexual expression from one another. Refusing to make the effort to see

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Galenic one-sex model: while biological sex is singular but opposite, the genders are purposefully demarcated into two groups in order to easily identify one version of masculinity over the other.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault argues that domination, which takes place within the Nietzschean “non-place” between adversarial moralities, materializes in the form of rigorous methods of control: “[domination] is fixed, throughout its history, in rituals, in meticulous procedures that impose rights and obligations. It establishes marks of its power and engraves memories on things and even within bodies” (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 85). Sumptuary codes that serve to dictate in plain terms the appropriate apparel choices for specific socioeconomic classes, delineated further between male and female citizens, reinforce the power over individuals the ruling class holds. When citizens are barred from making their own choices in apparel upon threat of financial ruin through fines or threat of physical violence as consequence of wearing one’s finery in dangerous neighborhoods, rulers compel obedience to the domination they seek to assert.

these identities as fluctuating (and perhaps occasionally in tandem with one another, but never necessarily *indicative* of one another), introduces the risk of mimicking the very homophobic and misogynistic discourse academics often seek to problematize.<sup>5</sup>

Early modern categories of the male and female, masculinity and femininity, and the hermaphrodite all existed in order to distinguish one individual from another, as well as to indicate the appropriate relationship one could have with another person. The categories seemed to serve the early moderns well enough; as long as an individual aligned his or her own identity with the one socially prescribed to him or her, there would be no problem. The categories, however, offered a false sense of agency. A male child, who should one day become a gentleman, was expected to be trained according to his specific gender category, as demonstrated in Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570).<sup>6</sup> Works like this one indicated the anxiety early

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<sup>5</sup> These scholars include historicists Stephen Greenblatt, Stephen Orgel, and Alan Bray who have developed their theories based on those originated by Michel Foucault. Although not entirely *wrong*, it is not enough to take these approaches as definitive truth without, to some extent, calling into question their methods. Valerie Traub fears some scholars, like Stephen Orgel, have already succumbed to the trap of mimicking the discourse they seek to problematize. These theories and issues are examined further in Chapter One.

<sup>6</sup> Effeminacy was so much to be avoided in young, impressionable aristocratic boys, that they were expected to pretend themselves into mature masculine situations. In Roger Ascham's "The Schoolmaster" (1570), he lists precisely in which games young aristocratic males should find themselves employed: "...to ride comely, to run fair at the Tilt, or Ring; to play at all Weapons, to shoot fair in Bow, or surely in Gun; to vault lustily, to run, to leap, to wrestle, to swim; to dance comely, to sing, and play on Instruments cunningly; to hawk, to hunt; to play at Tennis, and all Pastimes generally, which be joined with Labour, used in open Place, and on the Day-light, containing either some fit Exercise for War, or some pleasant Pastime for Peace, be not only comely and decent, but also very necessary for a courtly Gentleman to use" (63). Ascham explains these activities, citing Classical precedent: "For the self same noble City of Athens, justly commended of me before, did wisely, and upon great Consideration, appoint the Muses, Apollo, and Pallas, to be Patrons of Learning to their Youth. For the Muses, besides Learning, were also Ladies of Dancing, Mirth, and Minstrelsy: Apollo was God of Shooting, and Author of cunning playing upon Instruments; Pallas also was Lady Mistress in Wars. Whereby was nothing else meant, but that Learning should always be mingled with honest Mirth, and comely Exercises; and that War also should be governed by Learning, and moderated by Wisdom..." (62). Ascham believes that a gentleman who returns to classical mannerisms is one who merges a love of learning with both play and "exercises" (or, more specifically, the type of activity that requires physical labor and ultimately prepares one's body for the requirements of war). It is this careful blending of learning with other activities (either pleasant pastime or physical exercise) that engenders a sense of gentlemanly machismo in the aristocratic boy. Learning both softens aggressive behavior and enlightens frivolity. A young man who embodies Ascham's recommendations grows to be a gentleman of balance. Extreme behavior on either end of the gender spectrum is troubling. Ascham criticizes one ill-mannered child in particular who swears after "using much the Company of Servingmen, and giving good Ear to their Talk" because he "did easily learn, which he shall hardly forget all the days of his Life hereafter" (53). This verbally aggressive child

moderns held for individuals who did not neatly and happily fall into their socially-prescribed categories. Crossing gender boundaries for the most conservative early modern, such as Philip Stubbes, could awaken the fear that gender is not a fixed expression, that despite the appearance of one's biological sex, an individual may not truly *be* his or her apparent gender. In a society that prefers one's identity to be *worn*, cross-dressers seemed to suggest a hidden desire to actively change one's physical sex.<sup>7</sup>

While cross-dressing was generally taken as a severe transgression of both legal sumptuary codes as well as divinely-ordained nature, the early modern English stage supported and encouraged this type of transgression for the sake of entertainment. Studying the practice of hiring boys to perform female roles while cross-dressed in gowns has received varying degrees of academic interest; some early scholars took the practice as a matter of course, while others began to wonder precisely *why* female actors were not hired instead.<sup>8</sup> Although the question raises a fascinating puzzle, the pursuit of its answer has not resulted in satisfactory answers. Instead, scholars should consider the effects gender and sex categorization has had on the early modern English identity, including the performance of that identity on stage. Employing the generally-accepted assumption that the early modern English audience would have been comfortable with cross-dressing on stage, I suggest that women and children (of either sex) were categorized as a single unit that stood diametrically opposed to the masculine. If women and

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serves as a warning: "...if a young Gentleman will venture himself into the Company of Ruffians, it is over great a Jeopardy, lest their Fashions, Manners, Thoughts, Talk, and Deeds will very soon be over like" (53). Ascham uses this example to demonstrate that aggression such as this does not advance one's goals as an educated gentleman.

<sup>7</sup> In his *Anatomie of Abuses*, Philip Stubbes (1583) imagines masculine women who desire to become physical males through their cross-dressing: "...as they can wear apparel assigned only to man, I think they would as verily become men indeed..." (38).

<sup>8</sup> In "Nobody's Perfect," Orgel argues that "[stage transvestism] has not seemed so [basic and irresistible] to three centuries of theatre historians, who have treated it as a minor point of interest primarily for its effect on disguise plots. The matter has generally been disposed of by observing that the English were used to an all-male stage from generations of university productions and mystery plays, the latter performed by the all-male craft guilds, and that the appearance of women on stage was forbidden because it was felt in the Renaissance to compromise their modesty" (1).

boys were both regarded as immature versions of men (particularly according to the Galenic model), then the dichotomous relationship emerges not between men and women but instead between fully matured men and immature men.<sup>9</sup>

If young males and women were categorically the same and likewise stood in opposition to mature males, then it might suggest an explanation for the early modern English audience member's perceived comfort level with a cross-dressing female character and transvestite boy actor. Dympna Callaghan explains that, "...the all-male theatre did not eradicate difference but simply produced it within a visibly homogeneous economy of gender."<sup>10</sup> In this way, gender is *produced, demonstrated, and performed*; the effect highlights categorical discrepancies through the very performance of gender. Juliet Dusinberre articulates this point as well: "A woman in disguise smokes out the male world, perceiving masculinity as a form of acting, *the manner rather than the man*."<sup>11</sup> The cross-dressed woman is not mimicking a specific man; rather, she represents the *manner* of masculinity, reflecting masculinity back to itself. Bearing in mind that these are *fictional* female characters portrayed by *non-fictional* male actors, it seems the true reflection is male interpretation of the female performance of the feminine gender category. In the case of male actors playing cross-dressing female characters, the reflection further fractures so that reflected back is the male interpretation of the female interpretation of masculinity

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<sup>9</sup> Speaking in terms of the socioeconomic relationship women played within the patriarchy, Orgel identifies early modern women as "commodities": "Women are commodities in this culture, certainly, whose marriages are arranged for the advantage or convenience of men, either their fathers, or the male authority figures in their and their prospective husbands' families. But this too does not distinguish women from men: alliances were normally arranged for men just as for women—the distinction here is between fathers and children, not between the sexes; this is a patriarchal society" ("Nobody's Perfect" 10). The commodification of women in the early modern patriarchy is not to suggest that they were simply bought and traded like chattel (although it certainly can appear that way in a myriad of settings). Instead, the patriarchy sought to subjugate women as a parent subjugates a child; this is a system of dependence. In this system, a woman should depend upon the male authority in her life (either her father, her husband, or another adult male relative). Women who otherwise bucked the system of dependence (and many did, including the Queen) might well have seemed to have existed outside of the strict paradigms of the patriarchy, making them simultaneously appealing and threatening.

<sup>10</sup> Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*, 52.

<sup>11</sup> Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, 245. Emphasis mine.

through interpretation of the feminine gender category. Furthermore, Callaghan argues, “[a] representational schema that understands sexual difference completely within the parameters of masculinity does not require women: it occurs entirely within a material economy of males. Visible and audible sexual difference, that is, femininity, on the early modern stage comprised a subspecies of masculinity.”<sup>12</sup> Femininity *had* to be demonstrated so that the difference was obvious and clear to the observer. Callaghan’s argument, that femininity was seen as a *subspecies* of masculinity, suggests that the fully-realized Male might not consider attraction to people of a feminine nature to be homosexual, regardless of physical sex.<sup>13</sup>

This fluctuating Male sexual attraction is enacted on the early modern English stage: the “appropriate” attraction between those biologically male and those biologically female, while the “inappropriate” attraction takes place between those biologically male (or female) and those only suggested to be male (or female).<sup>14</sup> While exploring the ways in which cross-dressing (particularly in terms of disguise) led to homoerotic attractions, scholars often find themselves negotiating with the early modern concepts of what was “natural” and “appropriate.” These two categories, presented by early modern English pamphleteers as something God-given, perhaps even obvious, assume a specific definition of terms with which surely not every individual in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries would have been comfortable. In some cases, the natural seems to recommend procreation and endorses all sexual relationships that, through the bonds of

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<sup>12</sup> Callaghan, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Bray explores instances of overlooked homoerotic behavior in *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. In terms of unmarried servants participating in same-sex couplings with other servants, as long as the intercourse was not the force of rape, the secular courts took little interest in these particular homosexual pairings (47).

<sup>14</sup> Bray explains the relationship between notions of effeminacy in seventeenth-century English males and notions of modern homosexuality: “When the biblical scholars appointed by James I to produce a new version of the Bible (the famous Authorised Version of 1611) came to chapter six of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, they encountered two Greek words which could be associated with homosexuality. Their translation is revealing. The first they translated as ‘effeminate’, a word which then lacked the specifically homosexual connotations it was to acquire; the second they translated by a mere description, albeit a description coloured by their disapproval: ‘abusers of themselves with mankind’. More than three hundred years later, in the middle of the twentieth century, another panel of scholars considered the same passage and translated it afresh. [...] Both were translated in a word: ‘homosexuals’” (13).

a holy union, either result in children or at the very least *intend to* result in children. In other definitions, the natural is wild and chaotic, in need of stringent discipline and guidance; hence, instructional texts on the upbringing of children of either sex. Those whose genders and sexualities exist outside of the realm of the heteronormative hegemonic system of categorization could have elicited criticisms based on sexual preference, encouraging a tempting correlation between gender expression and sexuality.

In my first chapter, I establish scholarly foundational arguments on early modern gender constructions (especially homosexuality) through the practice of historicizing these constructs. Tracking patterns of gender, sex, and identity through the study of cross-dressing for many scholars in the last century was often informed by a need to observe trends of the ways in which sexualities were culturally accepted. According to Alan Bray, although homosexuality in early modern England was often given a mythological, poetic appeal, the reality of homosexuality was much more horrifying.<sup>15</sup> He says, “Except for a short period of time under Mary, homosexuality was a felony punishable by death throughout the [English Renaissance]. Taken cold it is difficult to account for the violence of this hostility, but in the context of the myths surrounding homosexuality...it is more explicable: in them it was part of an anarchy that threatened to engulf the established order, even the very stars in their courses.”<sup>16</sup> What is interesting is that it was the *practice* of sodomy that was a punishable crime and not just one’s sexual identification with homosexuality. Although the legal system relied on a decisively narrow definition of the term “sodomy” in order to prosecute potential criminals, society at large did not have as narrow an

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault argues the result of such horrifying power plays on the part of the monarchy resulted in concomitant secrecy and possibly even the very desire for participating in this “sinful” behavior in the first place. “[P]ower imposes secrecy on those whom it dominates, ...[and] it is perhaps just as indispensable to the latter: would they accept it if they did not see it as a mere limit placed on their desire, leaving a measure of freedom—however slight—intact? Power as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability” (86, vol. 1, *The History of Sexuality*).

<sup>16</sup> Bray, 62.

understanding of the term and, in fact, Orgel points out that “...in [popular attitudes] the term sodomy covered a multitude of horrendous sins, not all of them by any means involving homosexuality; but precisely for this reason it is to the point that sodomy was legally construed in such a way that it could hardly ever be prosecuted.”<sup>17</sup> Any individual who participated in a non-procreative, or unusual, sex act could be accused of practicing sodomy—two women who employed the use of a dildo in intercourse might be called sodomites.<sup>18</sup>

Although the examination of early modern issues with cross-dressing often seems to return to a discussion about the history of human sexualities, scholars should be wary of the temptation to reconstruct a linear approach to these concepts. Human sexualities have always been complex and in flux; gender identities, and indeed sexual preferences, have never been as simple as determining to whom one should be sexually attracted. Linear histories of homosexuality, much like Alan Bray’s in *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* and many others, seek out a teleological model. While such a course of study was useful in the beginning, as I hope to demonstrate in my first chapter, this rigid construct runs the risk of oversimplifying what was then (and still is today) complex in its “natural” state. Teleology is flawed, particularly in the study of human sexuality, because it leads to the conclusion that the *telos* is sexual purity. Madhavi Menon explains: “Such an understanding of sexuality depends on a progressive curve from the sodomitic to the homosexual in which the ‘homosexual’ provides the settled point from which to speak of the murkiness of the past.”<sup>19</sup> The teleological study of human sexualities requires a cultural acceptance of definitions—for each individual, the terms and categories must

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<sup>17</sup> Orgel, *Impersonations*, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Montaigne recalls a story he hears while traveling France in his *Travel Journal* about a female transvestite who falls in love with another woman; the two women use phallic devices in order to enjoy sexual satisfaction with one another in the absence of a penis. The transvestite was tried and hanged for her use of the devices, neither for her transvestism nor her homosexuality. This account is explored further in Chapter Two.

<sup>19</sup> Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 18. In “Friendship’s Loss,” Valerie Traub calls for a “history” of sexuality that is “...temporally capacious, conceptually organized, gender-comparative” (34).

not only apply but must also be ubiquitously understood. Scholars of the last century have demonstrated that this particular course of study leads to unsatisfactory conclusions often resulting in unanswered questions and speculation of cultural interest and intent.

I examine the differences between effeminate men and masculine women, according to early modern English standards and speculations, in my second chapter. I consult specifically the following sixteenth-century documents: Lodovicus Vives' *The Office and Duetie of an Husband* (1529), Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), Ambroise Paré's *On Monsters and Marvels* (1573), Michel Montaigne's *Essays* (1572-1580) and *Travel Journal* (1580), Philip Stubbes' *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), and William Perkins' "The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience" (1592). While some of these sources do not originate from England, works by their authors were available in English translation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>20</sup> One cannot assume that a necessarily wide audience would have been familiar with these texts or were interested in their subject matter; however, their availability offers scholars a glimpse at what some early moderns readers found interesting or even troubling. Perhaps it indicates a peculiar xenophilia or xenophobia: were the early modern English readers fascinated or frightened by the *difference* of people from Spain and France?

I believe the value in acknowledging these texts in a work ostensibly focused on early modern English stage practices lies in their very availability as English translations. Someone

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<sup>20</sup> John Florio translated Montaigne's *Essays* in 1603 (*The Essayes, or, Morall, Politike and Militarie Discourses*). Thomas Paynell translated Lodovicus Vives' treatise *The Office and Duetie of an Husband* in 1555. Ambroise Paré's *On Monsters and Marvels* was not available in English translation in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries; however, his text is used in this dissertation in order to present a second account for some of Montaigne's examples of unclear sex attributions. It is possible that some seventeenth-century English citizens would have been familiar with Paré as an accomplished surgeon after the English translation of his surgical works by Thomas Johnston in 1649. Paré is also used to offer medical opinion on the terms "hermaphrodite" and "monster," since these are concepts that are present in both Stubbes' *The Anatomie of Abuses* and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The principal texts with which I am interested were published before Paré's surgical texts were available in English; however, not all educated early modern English readers depended upon English translations in order to study or find interest in hermaphrodites. The late publication of Paré's works could suggest an English interest in his methods and conclusions through the middle of the seventeenth century.



believed there was a market for these texts, that there would be a consumer somewhere who would want to glean something from them. Although it is fair to surmise from the early modern English education that an English intellectual would likely have had proficiency in Latin, and possibly French as well, the translation of these texts broadens their availability to those English readers who may not have received or completed a formal education in religion or medicine. Paired with English texts focused on the relationship between one's physical appearance and socioeconomic role and status, conclusions may be drawn about the cultural climate surrounding early modern English dramas. Stubbes draws a connection between cross-dressers and hermaphrodites; Shakespeare's Rosalind worries that her companions may have forgotten she is really female. Paré and Montaigne relate local French anecdotes of an individual whose sex changed while jumping over a ditch. The flexibility of one's sex seems to have been a very real concern for at least some early modern English and French individuals. For many early modern Christians (as Vives, Ascham, and Beaumont and Fletcher point out), one's static sex and gender (determined by one's physical appearance) would have also determined the social role that individual would play. Flexibility in sex and gender suggests flexibility in social roles as well.

Although clothing itself assisted in constructing both one's social and sexual identities, the early modern pamphleteers' and essayists' works underscore the complex relationship society maintained with ontology, particularly as it applied to one's sexual identity. The use of these materials not only serves to facilitate a richer understanding of the cultural assumptions for gender construction, with which Shakespeare and his contemporaries could have been familiar, but also assists today's scholars in attempting to map out the dialogic continuum within which gender and sexuality have always existed. While the sources are at times prescriptive (such as Ascham and Vives) and other times condemnatory (such as Stubbes and Perkins), they can also

be surprisingly observational (such as Paré and Montaigne).<sup>21</sup> Individuals who challenged or thwarted early modern proscriptive identity categories through cross-dressing underscored the concept that gender itself is a *performance*, complete with a costume and expected dialogue: males dress and behave *this way*, while females dress and behave *that way*.<sup>22</sup>

Stubbes, and those like him, feared that gender itself is as easily changed as clothing, in essence revealing that all individuals might be hermaphrodites whose genders and sexes are as easily removed, performed, and altered as their apparel. Misrepresentation of one's assigned categorical identity in the early modern period would have been troubling to say the least. In the case of individuals who were biological hermaphrodites, whom Paré studies in *On Monsters and Marvels*, cultural categories did not always neatly describe the individual's preferred sense of identity. In the early modern period, however, one's identity was handed down by an authoritative, governing body that presumed to know better; hermaphrodites who attempted to pursue an identity that did not follow the prescription of one that was heteronormative were corrected. Paré's hermaphrodites were treated like transvestites—individuals who were simply confused about their “natural” category as male or female. Once the hermaphrodite could determine (through sexual attraction and desire) a heteronormative identity, then that individual was barred from crossing into other sexual and gender categories. Although the early modern period seems to have demonstrated a growing impulse to define one's identity (and then to be

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<sup>21</sup> The early modern French documents by Ambroise Paré and Michel Montaigne are necessary additions to the exploration of early modern English concepts of gender, sex, and identity. These texts specifically offer apparently real accounts of hermaphrodites, which is a concept Philip Stubbes expresses some anxiety toward; the French texts are offered in the same spirit as the ancient Greek medical approaches (of Aristotle and Galen)—they are meant to demonstrate moments of difference as well as overlap between cultural identity constructs.

<sup>22</sup> While the cross-dressers pointed to the performativity of gender through their mimicry of the opposite gender, the publication of books like Ascham's and Vives' likewise indicated that one's “natural” gender is also paradoxically a performance. While male children “should” find an interest in particular masculine activities, they should likewise be coached and trained to embrace those masculine activities in order to embody specific categories of maleness, such as the gentleman.

able to publicly declare it through attire), the exploration of various identities was guarded, directed, and trained. An individual seemed to have been granted permission to explore an identity, as long as it measured properly against the model presented by the ruling hegemony.

In chapter three, I analyze the practice of male actors performing as cross-dressed female characters. My argument examines the complications of the lens used in these dramas (men's perceptions of women's perceptions of men), and for this portion I explore Shakespeare's works, particularly *Twelfth Night* (1601), *As You Like It* (1599-1600), and *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1597).<sup>23</sup> I am interested in and attempt to answer the question: to what extent does biological sex (a "natural" self, if such a thing exists) contribute to the ways in which characters explore the concept of crafting a gendered or sexual identity? I believe that, although many sources attempt to judge the natural self, the self unencumbered by social (and oftentimes religious) laws and boundaries is neutrality realized. This self exists outside of the parameters of judgment, neither good nor bad, neither holy nor sinful. When considering the actions of a decidedly male character (one played by an adult male actor whose character never cross-dresses and would qualify in early modern socioeconomic terms as a fully-realized Man), particularly when this male interacts with a female character who crosses gender-delineated boundaries, I believe it is a futile task to attempt to qualify the man's actions as decidedly homoerotic. I believe that this conclusion, this qualification, leads to judgment in some respect or other and distracts scholarly attention away from the real issue at hand: with what respect is gender identity broken down, reconstructed, and *performed* as a reflection back to this Man?

*Twelfth Night's* Viola/Cesario, for instance, purposefully and voluntarily replaces her femininity with masculinity; yet this transformation is further troubled by the gender of the actor

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<sup>23</sup> I focus entirely on Shakespeare within this chapter simply because his works are such a dominating force in social studies for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

performing Viola's performance of Cesario. Unlike the portrayal of young masculinity by Rosalind as Ganymede, Viola's demonstration of Cesario does not overtly purposefully lampoon masculinity. Instead, Viola/Cesario reflects masculinity back to itself through the portrayal of the young page in an attempt to survive without the security of a male escort.

Rosalind/Ganymede in *As You Like It* demonstrates both an abusive and domineering masculinity when she hopes to dissuade Phoebe's sexual attraction; likewise, she reflects and refracts a representational performance of femininity to Orlando when Rosalind as Ganymede pretends to behave as an exaggeration of early modern female stereotype. The boy actors portraying these female characters had an immense challenge ahead of them: for a few hours on stage, demonstrate the ways in which gender identity is merely *performative* yet paradoxically still *authentic*. Although the boy actor was presumably expected to help audiences "forget" his own burgeoning masculinity while in the guise of a female character, he was also primarily playing a female character, no matter her apparel. When the female character cross-dresses, she becomes a representation of gender performed. In the moments when her resolve falters, as it does for both Viola and Rosalind when sexual attraction and desire seem to overwhelm them, she simultaneously maintains a "natural" identity as a female. The refraction of identity (the boy's real performance of a female character's fictional performance of a perceived male alter-ego) complicates seemingly tidy categories for identity under the auspices of gender and sexuality.

I turn to other playwrights in Chapter Four, examining Middleton and Dekker's representation of Moll Cutpurse/Mary Frith in *The Roaring Girl* (1607-1610) as a particularly outstanding example of a masculine woman who manages to attract the attention of other males

while unapologetically maintaining her cross-dress.<sup>24</sup> I also turn to *Love's Cure* (1625-1626?)<sup>25</sup> by Fletcher and Beaumont to complicate the discussion on Nature and gender identification—neither Clara nor her brother Lucio dress “appropriately” according to social expectations, or (as their parents might argue) according to their true natures. The question at stake here is whether or not Nature and Society are ever harmonious in the “right” expression of gender identity. These dramatic works, and surely others like them, broaden not only the concept of “common” early modern beliefs, but they also serve as a sort of litmus test that supports a comparative and complex “history” of human sexuality.

In the case of *The Roaring Girl's* Moll Cutpurse, her cross-dressing is unapologetic and bold—she assumes agency in the construction of her identity, in spite of hegemonic discourse and arbitrary sumptuary codes that would seek to dominate and regulate that identity. While Moll cross-dresses, preferring men's attire to women's, she does not attempt to cross sexual boundaries. In fact, Moll does not attempt to approach sexualities in any regard; responding to rumors about her loose sexual morals and willingness to sleep with both a husband and a wife (presumably made obvious by her willingness to disobey hegemonic categorization in her

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<sup>24</sup> Marjorie Garber, in *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, is careful to note that it is not merely the wearing of “gender specific” clothing that proved bothersome to early modern English sociocultural sensibilities. Rather, she argues, “...it is ‘excess’ that is stigmatized and deplored. Excess, that which overflows a boundary, is the space of the transvestite. Dancing shirts, ruffles, face painting—...could be dislocated from the context of sumptuary laws and rearticulated as signs of another kind of vestimentary transgression, one that violated expected boundaries of gender identification or gender decorum. For one kind of cross, inevitably, crosses over into another: the categories of ‘class’ and ‘rank,’ ‘estate and condition,’ which seem to contain and to regulate gender...” (28). She correctly points out that the issue of gender was not and could not be divorced from class, and because the two were, as she says “commutable, if not equivalent,” the sociocultural anxiety toward the English transvestite must have been severe enough to warrant the publication of such polemical tracts as *Hic Mulier* and *Haec-Vir* (32).

<sup>25</sup> Because the early performance history of *Love's Cure* has long been lost, the precise date of the play's composition is speculative at best. The earliest date the editor for *Love's Cure* in the version I consulted found satisfactory is 1625: “...the Folio text presents a composite play the sub-plots of which, joint efforts of Beaumont and Fletcher in ca. 1605, have been revised, rewritten, reordered, and fitted into a main plot by Philip Massinger after 1625” (Williams, “Textual Introduction” 7). He goes on to recommend 1626: “Though it is likely that *Love's Cure* was performed in its original condition—perhaps by the Children of Paul's—there is no record of a performance by the Children and no record of its ever having been licensed for the stage. It must be supposed, however, that it did enjoy a performance in its revised form, for a Prologue was written for the occasion (1626?)” (11).

apparel), Moll makes her sexual preference clear: she has none. Moll does not seek a sexual relationship with men specifically because she believes she is man enough for herself; she also seems to acknowledge and hold in high esteem heteronormativity in the context of marriage. Because she is not married and does not seek to find a partner, Moll herself is chaste. Early modern hegemonic discourses, like those examined in the second chapter, that impose religious morality upon sexuality seem to have convinced Moll so that she will not transgress those boundaries, merely seeking to express her self-created identity through her apparel choices. The siblings Clara and Lucio of *Love's Cure*, separated and raised by their father Alvarez and mother Eugenia respectively, at the outset present a conundrum for the early modern categorical system of identity-imposition. Raised by the opposite sex parent, Clara and Lucio are, for reasons not made abundantly clear in the play, dressed and trained as cross-dressed children. Although the siblings seem to understand that they are biologically female and male, they have no trouble embracing the masculine and feminine identities respectively. Clara, taken for her protection to live with her exiled father, is immersed in a martial culture—she fights, dresses, and speaks like a soldier. Lucio, her younger brother, remains at home with his mother and prefers the company of women as well as to wear their culturally-codified apparel. When the siblings are reunited, Alvarez and Eugenia expect their children to easily resort to their “God-given” natures—Clara is required to stop wearing breeches and to start exuding femininity, while Lucio is admonished for his effeminacy and desire to wear gowns. The parents employ the tutor/trainer Bobadillo to correct the siblings; however, it is sexual attraction and desire that ultimately help the siblings to align their identities with the heteronormative hegemonic categories of male and female, masculine and feminine. The play seems to conclude that, because the siblings are not sexually attracted to the same sex, they revert to “natural” behaviors of gender upon the introduction of

sexual desire. The conflation of gender with sexuality in both *The Roaring Girl* and *Love's Cure* tempts scholars with supposed correlative relationships between outward gender expression (in the case of apparel, for instance) and one's sexual identity.

I conclude with a critical examination of the effects and consequences these early modern identity categories have had on modern perceptions of gender and sexuality. The plays, pamphlets, education tracts, and medical treatises reveal a culture that depended upon the imposition of gender categories in order to create a clear and socially-approved identity for individuals. As I hoped to demonstrate in this project, this approach to identity sterilizes, bonds, and oversimplifies a concept of “normal” against which the socially-prescribed categories are made to contrast. When a category is imposed upon an identity (gender, sex, sexuality, etc.), that category implies two things: the first, an existence of a “normal” identity; and the second, a ubiquitous definition of categorical terms. When rigidity, as in the case of categorization, is imposed upon complex and fluid structures (such as gender and sexuality), that category, however progressive it may appear or attempt to be, merely reinforces the expectation that this category stands in opposition to another category, a “normal” category. The “normal” dominates all other categories because those disparate identities exist as a fractured version of the norm. A definitive category for a set of behaviors, representations, and expressions immediately serves to alienate those who self-identify within that category from those who self-identify outside of it. The categorization of genders and sexualities through the use of specific terminology requires definitions that attempt to apply universally across the board—in order to be a member of Category A, one must meet certain criteria while likewise not belonging to Category B based on an absence of certain criteria. The categorization of human sexuality and gender identity

imposes an oversimplification of and rigidity to concepts that are necessarily complex and multi-dimensional.

Academics (professionals and students alike) benefit from a closer reading of these texts under the rubric of tearing down gender and sex categories—such a reading reveals the very complexities and points of crisis rife within the texts themselves as their authors grapple with the attempt to classify and categorize the unclassifiable. At best, the authors speculate and assume about their subject matter (Stubbes, for instance, assumes that cross-dressing women wish to change their very physical nature and somehow become hermaphrodites). At worst, they convince their readers that the categories are not only applicable but that they are comfortable, that a “normal” exists with a ubiquitous definition upon which all individuals within a culture agree. When characters in a play, individuals from medical case studies and travel journals, or citizens dominated by stringent socioreligious codes encounter these crisis points, their discomfort with their assigned category should indicate to readers the extent to which setting rigid boundaries for identities can ultimately defeat the goal of the categories in the first place.

Examining the fluid yet sometimes fixed relationships between gender and sexuality under the rubric of identity often becomes frustratingly tautological: the ways in which an individual uses the body as a site of expression for gender and/or sexuality are paradoxically yet simultaneously informed by social conventions and reactive against those same structures. While the crossing of genders in clothing or behavior might inevitably lead to some discussion of sexual preference, it is not satisfactory to seek a correlation that is not necessarily present. Human sexuality is a fluid concept, as is gender identity. Broadening definitions of masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, and homosexuality encourages the understanding that human sexuality is not *always* the impetus for *all* gendered expressions and behaviors.



## Chapter One

### Martial Maids

The study of the cross-dressing phenomenon represented in some seventeenth-century dramatic texts (*As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Roaring Girl*, *Love's Cure*, just to name a few) leads to murky conclusions. Cross-dressing on the early modern English stage has long puzzled scholars with its seeming unabashed acceptance of a practice that was otherwise utterly non-normative, not to mention illegal in the period. Some scholars, like Stephen Orgel, have sought to challenge the practice with the question “*why?*” In a time when clothing was legislated according to social status, why would the early moderns seem not only to accept the cross-dressing of boy actors on stage but also the cross-dressing of female characters within a play? Searching for the answer to this question may lead some to explore the ways in which cross-dressing and sexuality may overlap. The pursuit may be understandable: cross-dressing, as a non-normative behavior, could be seen as an attempt to legitimate non-normative sexual practices. Perhaps a man who dresses as a woman hopes that through his feminine attire, his sexual attraction to other men will *appear* to reside within hegemonic sexual order (only the masculine and feminine can be sexual partners).<sup>1</sup> Seeking the supposed link between cross-dressing and sexual preference ultimately reinforces the erroneous belief that there is a *natural* as well as an *unnatural* expression of that preference.

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<sup>1</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 68. Greenblatt argues that Nature herself appears to seek procreative, normative sexual behavior (that is, between a man and a woman, and more precisely between a husband and a wife) in *Twelfth Night*'s Olivia. This idea is explored in greater detail in Chapter Three.

## Playing the (Wo)Man

While we might trace methods of individuation from the social group, generally speaking the early moderns would not have had the same concept of identity-construction as, say, readers today have; rather, they might have recognized one who broke from the hegemonic, normative “same” as a threat. In the literary texts this dissertation explores as well as in the select social commentaries of the seventeenth century, there is evidence of conflicting concepts of identity-construction within a system that would seek to diagnose, control, and reconfigure that which existed outside of or antagonistic to the patriarchy. Clothing was a fairly simple and utterly visual method for control—if one noticed the servant of a neighbor dressing above his or her station, then one would have cause to complain. The servant would represent the chaotic, uncontrolled (or worse, uncontrollable) other, the identity that refused subjugation. Women who cross-dressed as men primarily broke social customs (not to mention sumptuary codes)—*The Roaring Girl’s* Moll Cutpurse represents a woman who apparently seeks social equality with men.<sup>2</sup> A cross-dressing servant or woman threatens the oppressive patriarchy with chaotic and unruly subservience. When the suppressed seeks equality with the oppressor, power shifts and ideology crumbles. To the early moderns, clothing as a status symbol controlled social inferiors and maintained proper authorities and ideologies. Teaching the subjugated that clothing not only dictated social status but also gender expression (and probably sexual expression as well) served as a masterfully manipulative tool. Stubbes’ *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), for instance, controls

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<sup>2</sup> Remarkably, Moll does not attempt to actually *disguise* her womanliness. She does not actively deny that she is a woman; rather, she represents the caricature for a strong, masculine woman.

through fear and threatens holy wrath when he suggests that subversion of socially-accepted dress codes could result in a desire for an actual physical change.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of clarity, I borrow from Judith Butler's deliberate usage of the terms "sexuality" and "gender." Butler recognizes a clear distinction between "sex" and "gender," and she argues, "[t]he presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one."<sup>4</sup> Following Butler's lead, I use the term "sex" to mean the physical body as either male or female (although, in the case of the hermaphrodite in particular, we see that even the physical body does not always accept this binary).<sup>5</sup> "Gender" recalls the notion of a masculine-feminine continuum wherein one's expression of masculinity or femininity exists as a fluid blend of both extremes.<sup>6</sup> This distinction must be made not only for clarity's sake but also in order to

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<sup>3</sup> Stubbes condemns cross-dressing women in particular, saying: "...I thinke thei would as verely become men indeed as now thei degenerate from godlie sober women, in wearing this wanton leude kind of attire, proper onely to manne" (38).

<sup>4</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 9. Emphasis original to text.

<sup>5</sup> In *Undoing Gender*, Butler revisits this concept: "As I understand it, sexual difference is the site where a question concerning the relation of the biological to the cultural is posed and reposed, where it must and can be posed, but where it cannot, strictly speaking, be answered. Understood as a border concept, sexual difference has psychic, somatic, and social dimensions that are never quite collapsible into one another but are not for that reason ultimately distinct" (186).

<sup>6</sup> Butler even goes so far as to suggest that gender is not necessarily a natural inclination or feeling but more specifically an *act*: "Gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. [...] This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted *social temporality*. Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (*Gender Trouble* 191-2). Indeed, we observe Butler's theory of gender performance in texts like the ones examined in Chapter Two. If gender *were* a natural inclination or a natural set of behavioral patterns, then there would seem to be little use for guidebooks on how to raise boys and girls. In the literary texts, such as Fletcher and Beaumont's *Love's Cure* and Middleton's *The*

underscore that human sexuality, the “basest”<sup>7</sup> concept of sexual attraction to another person, is tied neither to one’s sex nor to one’s gender.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, Butler points out in *Undoing Gender* that the concept of gender is also itself a representation of hegemonic assumptions and regulations. She suggests that “...gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms [masculine and feminine] are deconstructed and denaturalized. Indeed, it may be that the very apparatus that seeks to install the norm also works to undermine that very installation, that the installation is, as it were, definitionally incomplete.”<sup>9</sup> While I agree with Butler’s finding of the terms “masculine” and “feminine” to be at times inaccurate and misleading, I intend to make clear in this dissertation the distinction between “sex” and “gender” to be a distinction between one’s apparent physical body and “everything else” that goes into constructing a sexual identity.<sup>10</sup>

Although it is not unheard-of that the masculine woman or effeminate man could find her or his sexual identity to support non-normative sexual pairings (same-sex partnerships, for

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*Roaring Girl*, we plainly observe that masculinity and femininity are performances that can be mastered. These plays are examined in Chapter Four.

<sup>7</sup> I use “basest” here not as a value judgment but instead to indicate that attraction deep within all of us that is, in its first moment, free from morality and social decorum. Some people reject this attraction if they do not believe it conforms to hegemonic norms; others fully embrace it regardless of predetermined concepts of “appropriateness.”

<sup>8</sup> In *Undoing Gender*, Butler challenges her previous definition of the terms “sex” and “gender,” and explains that to limit gender in terms of “masculine” and “feminine,” “[t]he conflation of gender with masculine/feminine, man/woman, male/female, thus performs the very naturalization that the notion of gender is meant to forestall” (43). This is why I refer to gender as existing on a continuum; albeit, on either end of the continuum are the extremes of “masculine” and “feminine,” it should be clear that within the spaces between the two heteronormative genders are a myriad other classifications of how one identifies one’s gender.

<sup>9</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 42.

<sup>10</sup> I also agree with Butler’s conclusion regarding this problem with defining the terms “sex” and “gender”: “...no simple definition of gender will suffice, and that more important than coming up with a strict and applicable definition is the ability to track the travels of the term through public culture. [...] I want to suggest that the debates concerning the theoretical priority of sexual difference to gender, of gender to sexuality, of sexuality to gender, are all crosscut by another kind of problem, a problem that sexual differences poses, namely, the permanent difficulty of determining where the biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end” (*Undoing Gender* 184-185). In spite of an overwhelming interest in seeking out some definition or other for these terms, I aim to focus my argument based on Butler’s encouragement to trace the terms through public culture—where have these intersections shown up before? How have they been handled in those historical moments? What were the social consequences then that have stuck with us today?

instance), we must not confuse the two identities as prescriptive of one another. Just as likely, as is the case for Eddie Izzard, the masculine woman or effeminate man may find herself or himself attracted to “normative” sexual pairings (opposite-sex partnerships). This distinction between the two disparate identities is crucial to the understanding of the seventeenth-century texts—the early moderns would not have had the language or concept of identity construction to be able to discuss the issue using the framework of today’s scholarship on human sexuality. There seems to be an essential *need* within us to feel as though we can understand one another in terms of sexuality. The pursuit of understanding human sexuality is frustrating on the face of it because of its complexity, and yet “...surely we must have knowledge here. We must be able to say that we know, and to communicate that in the professional journals, and justify our decision, our act. In other words, these exercises interrogate whether the gender norm that establishes coherent personhood has been successfully accomplished.”<sup>11</sup> It seems that in order to understand how our sexualities shape us as social creatures, we also must understand how sexualities shape others within our social sphere—more to the point, we are fascinated by earlier concepts and constructs of sexualities because of their inherent complexities as well as what their exploration might reveal to us about the early texts.

Alan Bray argues in *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* that in order to understand the multiple layers of meaning within early texts, scholars must first seek to contextualize the early modern variant to today’s concept of “homosexuality.” In order to do this, Bray begins his exploration by first examining both religious and satirical texts for discussion of sexuality; what he discovers is ultimately surprising. Bray looks to several sources that make wild claims against “sodomites,” sources that go so far as to claim that one who practices sodomy likewise practices

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<sup>11</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 67.

bestiality: “[t]he one word [“sodomy”] was used because the one concept was intended, and this was a broader concept than simply homosexuality. The notion underlying these passages was not homosexuality but a more general notion: debauchery; and debauchery was a temptation to which all, in principle at least, were subject.”<sup>12</sup> Here, the obvious fear is that the individual always already naturally possesses the potential to abuse his or her sexuality (against oneself, against others of either sex, against animals). Rather than taking issue with which person chooses to sleep with whom based on mutual attraction, the fear instead is that exercising this sexual “right” is more indicative of the potential sexual extremism that exists within us all.

The trap, however, lies in the way we presuppose how the concept of homosexuality worked for the early moderns. At work against citizens accused of “sodomy,” we will see, is a social fear of uninhibited *desire*. Ed Cohen points out that, “[s]ince sodomy was never conceived of as the antithesis of any normative sexual standard, it was perceived to be a ubiquitous, nonprocreative possibility resulting from the inherent sinfulness of human nature.”<sup>13</sup> Far from a socially accepted practice, sodomy was more a term to indicate unbridled, uninhibited sexuality. There is trouble with this specific concept of “sodomy” as it applies to the scope of human sexuality across time: our own conclusions and interpretations of sociological and sexual trends rely almost entirely upon the skewed perspectives from the limited resources available to us. Examining the ever fluid and constantly fluctuating expressions of sexuality and gender according to teleology, a two-gender model, or modern concepts of our own terms may lead us to tautological conclusions. We see what we want to see; we find what we intend to find.

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<sup>12</sup> Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, “Legislating the Norm,” 171.

Traub asks “How do we *know* when there were no homoerotic desires between historical figures? What is the basis of our knowledge of the eroticism of the past? How *do* we know what (we think) we know.”<sup>14</sup> Traub warns scholars that:

...if eroticism is always embedded in other forms of social relation, if acts of bodily intimacy are rendered intelligible only from within a precise social location, if the power of eroticism to signify is variable and uncertain, if we cannot always be confident that we have interpreted its presence or absence correctly, then eroticism, like sodomy and friendship, is apprehensible only as a relational structure—not only between people, but between people and history. Not only will our desires for a usable past necessarily inform the history of sexuality we create, but the epistemological opacity of sexuality will be constitutive of the methods by which we investigate it.<sup>15</sup>

Scholars of the history of homosexuality, or really of the history of interpersonal relationships at all, must be keenly aware of the lens through which they are viewing their historical subjects.<sup>16</sup> If the concept of homosexuality versus heterosexuality (let alone sexual preference or identity in general) did not exist in the terms within which they exist today, then today’s scholars must approach their hypotheses with the utmost caution. Is the gap between these disparate forms of understanding sexuality in the least surmountable? According to Traub, we may only overcome them with great care. Listing a plethora of potential pitfalls (and quite a few actual traps already

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<sup>14</sup> Traub, “Friendship’s Loss,” 26.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7.

<sup>16</sup> Even Foucault warns his readers not to assume that human sexuality itself has always been the repressed entity that it seems we are wont to see it as. Instead, he recommends “...putting [the repressive hypothesis] back within a general economy of discourses on sex in modern societies since the seventeenth century” (11, vol. 1, *The History of Sexuality*). Similarly, the study of sexuality must also be “put back” into its proper context rather than seeking to find an omega toward which it strives.

fallen into), Traub's outlook is a grim one.<sup>17</sup> In order to avoid these scholarly disasters and manage an actual and objective history of human sexuality, Traub suggests we might "...create a temporally capacious, conceptually organized, gender-comparative history of homosexuality. [...] Fitted together in a dialogic rather than teleological mould, viewed from a wide angle and with all the rough edges showing, this research might find a form that is both conceptually coherent and energizing of new areas of inquiry."<sup>18</sup> In *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, Menon agrees and suggests we embrace a non-linear concept of "history."<sup>19</sup> When we trouble concepts of temporality as well as the "development" of human sexuality, we will recognize that homosexuality did not suddenly emerge. It existed before and outside of temporal definition (and even cultural ones). What we ultimately discover is that gender (the masculine – feminine continuum) and desire do not always inform one another.

According to Menon, the word "history" itself is rife with troubling innuendo: "...the famous distinction between identitarian sexuality and sodomitical desire is produced by a historicism that grafts desire onto chronology and follows a logic that is hetero rather than homo. Even when it is ostensibly studying homosexuality, then, historicism rejects "homo" tendencies

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<sup>17</sup> Traub's complete list of potential problem areas: "...the vexed relation of friendship to eroticism, the problem of anachronistic terminology, the relationship between erotic acts and erotic identities, and the differences between concepts of erotic identity, predisposition and orientation. To this we might add: the dynamic of secrecy and disclosure; the role of gender-segregated spaces; the relevance (or irrelevance) of age, status, and racial hierarchies; the existence (or nonexistence) of communities and subcultures; the relationship of homoeroticism to gender deviance and conformity; the role of medical and legal discourses in the production of knowledge; and the effects of racial or geographical othering. Additional issues are specific to the history of female bodies and experience: the role of female anatomy, especially the clitoris, in cultural representations; the derivative, secondary order of lesbian visibility within patriarchal culture, which underpins conceptual misrecognitions such as lesbian 'impossibility' and 'imitation'; and the constitutive social force of representations of female homoeroticism compared to those of male homoeroticism. Each of these issues assumes different contours, contents, and emphases when examined from historically specific locations. At the same time, their persistence as issues suggests that we might reconsider whether what is sometimes presented as whole-scale diachronic change (before and after sexuality, before and after identity) might rather be a manifestation of ongoing synchronic tensions in conceptualizations about bodies, desires, and their relation to gender as they confront the realities of new social formations" ("Friendship's Loss" r33).

<sup>18</sup> Traub, "Friendship's Loss," 34.

<sup>19</sup> Menon recommends a "rhizomatic" approach to history "...[r]ather than heterohistoricism's teleological insistence on discrete pockets of progressive time..." which allows for the conclusion that "...chronology does not determine teleology, and teleology does not govern desire" (19).



that violate knowing distinctions between times and desires.”<sup>20</sup> Because history relies upon the study of *difference* (us vs. them, then vs. now), it is “hetero” in nature. Unless and until we consider sexuality as a piece of human nature that exists *independent from* a linear sense of history, we will continue to make the same assumptions that human sexuality somehow came into being. In fact, even ideas of who desires whom might be further problematized. Is it not entirely a “hetero” concept to suggest that the masculine gender (of either sex) will seek the feminine gender (of either sex)?<sup>21</sup> When we divorce gender from desire, we are granted a more open, fluid concept of “natural” expressions of gender and sexual identities. Crossing sociosexual boundaries with apparel assists in widening the gap between gender and desire, calling into question the roles desire, gender, and biological sex play within heteronormative paradigms.

According to socioreligious texts of the seventeenth century, explored in greater detail in Chapter Two, there are “correct” answers to questions of appropriate objects of sexual desire, as well as “incorrect” answers that require some form of control or *correction* in order to reflect hegemonic values and expectations. For instance, an individual who sought the sexual company of a same-sex partner would either face severe consequences for his or her behavior, or would be expected to participate in a dialogue that would seek to reveal this person’s “true” biology. Same-sex attraction not only subverts the potential for procreative sex acts in the two members of the couple, but it also suggests that such an attraction exists *in spite of* normative sexual

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<sup>20</sup> Menon, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Menon argues that “...the insistence on ‘proper’ history can only produce a sanitized version of desire that actively abjects the homo in order to assert the triumph of the hetero that historicism has deemed its fit and proper subject” (14). In this way, desire might always allude to heteronormativity and gendered categorization. Regardless of physical bodies and whether or not one self-identifies as masculine or feminine (or a combination of both), heterohistory suggests that sodomy and cross-dressing seek the same end. The macho male sodomite seeks to dominate the weaker, more effeminate male, and the cross-dresser wishes he or she could participate in heteronormative sex practices in spite of homosexual desire.

pairings. Bray presents some fascinating logical conundrums. At once, the elite early modern Englishman (for, Bray reminds his readers, we cannot allow ourselves to be caught making assumptions for all of England when we only consult sources from the elite population) offers anxiety that the potential for sexual deviance is within each and every one of us. Further, the anxiety goes, only some people act out fantasies, which could in turn destroy the population's moral fabric in general. It is this anxiety of social upheaval that encourages the aristocracy (religious or secular) to threaten any and all deviants—by making an example of one sodomite (for the sake of the masses) we save ourselves from the temptation to step outside predetermined sociosexual boundaries. If the elite speaks for the masses (which is a dangerous assumption to make but one that simultaneously points to social expectations of norms),<sup>22</sup> then from Bray's standpoint the elite sought to control sexuality by the threat of God's judgment.<sup>23</sup> I would like to offer that, while a great deal of religious and satirical pamphlets, poems, and plays do indeed focus almost entirely on God's judgment of humankind, the social anxiety expressed in these pieces does not solely rest upon threats of holy punishment.

In addition to the fears of eternal damnation, the early modern Englishperson (again, if the literate elite can speak for the illiterate masses) might also have feared an unidentifiable entity, someone without category, someone altogether too "natural." Bray argues that to the early modern religious mind, God primarily created order, and that order extended into English

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<sup>22</sup> The danger rests in believing that the "unwashed" masses accepted the representation of their beliefs and values by the literate elite. Rather than assuming the illiterate members of early modern communities were supportive of these representations, we should consider instead that the literate elite assumed on the basis of their own power or socioreligious prestige that they understood best the beliefs and values of all members of their communities. According to normative patriarchal standards, the ruling class necessarily oppresses and silences the working class or else faces the risk of encouraging a true democratic approach to determining social mores.

<sup>23</sup> Bray points to Du Bartas's *The Divine Weeks of the World's Birth* (1604), David Lindsay's *The Monarchie* (c. 1553), the broadsheet *Of the Horrible and Woful Destruction of, Sodome and Gomorra* (c. 1570). He explains that, "[w]orks such as these take us far beyond the social origins of their authors; they are not the voice of the common man or woman, but what they had to say about homosexuality was something the village tailor or the London apprentice apparently appreciated, and so far as their attitudes to homosexuality differed from those of their masters and betters we can expect them at the very least to sound a warning note" (19).

society: “If order and ‘degree’ were the rule in the created universe at large, would not the same also be true in individual and social life? [...] It is a view of the world in which Nature is a unity, as is its Creator....”<sup>24</sup> Anything outside of heterosexual procreative marriages does not properly fit within that created order, and homosexuality, Bray argues, would have existed in the chaos before God created order.<sup>25</sup> The fear, then, is a return to chaos, a destruction of God’s order; if this is true, we might also make a case similar to the one Phillip Stubbes asserts. Those who participate in homosexual activities are not only shirking their social orders but they also metamorphose into an entirely different entity: a hermaphrodite.<sup>26</sup> Bray refers to Drayton’s *The Moone-Calfe* (1627), pointing to the set of opposite sex conjoined twins as sexual deviants in themselves—the female seeks out her sexual proclivities in heterosexual terms while the male seeks out his in homosexual terms.<sup>27</sup> Most shocking about this mooncalf is that the twins are neither fully female nor fully male—the half of the mooncalf with female genitalia is described as masculine, while the half with male genitalia is described as effeminate.<sup>28</sup>

Drayton’s mooncalf represents the monstrosity of the hermaphrodite, the source of Stubbes’ anxiety of cross-dressing. Drayton’s anxious admonition of his hermaphroditic mooncalf differs slightly from Stubbes’—whereas Stubbes accuses cross-dressing women of intentionally changing their natural appearance, Drayton declares that this hermaphrodite represents the holy punishment of parental sin.<sup>29</sup> In *The Moon-Calfe*, Earth births the conjoined twins after having conceived them with Satan. The twins represent Earth’s punishment for her

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<sup>24</sup> Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Stubbes, 38.

<sup>27</sup> Bray, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Drayton composed his poem in dialogue with the pamphlets *Hic Mulier* and *Haec-Vir* (1620).

<sup>29</sup> As Stubbes ultimately reduces female cross-dressing to the point of hermaphroditism, he suggests that physical sex can be easily removed and replaced with another. In a patriarchy seeking to legislate the very wardrobe of its citizens, the concept that an individual can so easily shift from one identity to another (cross social boundaries just as deftly as sexual ones) is not only troubling but is utterly opposite to the patriarchy’s standards.

sinful and unbridled sexual desires. These obvious social fears of the hermaphrodite may lead to greater understanding of early modern stage practices. In light of these expressed fears,<sup>30</sup> why would the early modern theatre prefer to encourage transvestism, when there was such great anxiety about the hermaphrodite according to the period's literature? Why not simply use women to fill the female roles? Orgel suggests that the reason lies in the early modern English concept of gender identity. He explains that, "...boys were, like women—but unlike men—acknowledged objects of sexual attraction for men."<sup>31</sup> Here the dichotomy between the male and female actually becomes less clear. The early modern English mind did not necessarily delineate between physical sex organs—rather, they delineated between men and the objects of men's sexual desires. This means that, if a boy can be the object of a heterosexual married man's sexual desire, then that boy is more likened to a woman than to a grown man. (Adult men, after all, are not to be the objects of other adult men's sexual desire—*that* would be homosexuality.) Orgel reminds us that, "The love of men for boys is all but axiomatic in the period; and despite fulminations in theological and legal contexts against the abominable crime of sodomy, most of what men and boys could do with each other did not constitute sodomy, and it was, as we have seen, a crime that was hardly ever prosecuted."<sup>32</sup> Boys and women were to the early modern male heterosexual mind one and the same as objects to be desired or even sexually conquered. Sex with either one of them would be appropriate—with a woman for procreation and with a boy to preserve one's chastity.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> We must not forget Bray's warning that those who participated in this printed dialogue did not necessarily speak for the opinion of the masses.

<sup>31</sup> Orgel, *Impersonations*, 70.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>33</sup> That is to say that the men were "chaste" because they were not sexually involved with other women. See Bray *The History of Homosexuality*, 47.

According to Orgel, the cross-dressed boy actors were not the objects of sexual desire only for male audience members, however; women were not only socially permitted to attend the theatre unescorted, but they also made up a large portion of the theatre-going population.<sup>34</sup> Orgel argues that women, like men, must have also gotten *something* out of attending the plays—to assume that only the men approved of the cross-dressed boy actors is short-sighted. If such a large portion of the theatre-going population was made up of women, then it stands to Orgel’s reason that women likewise approved in some way of the stage transvestism, particularly because they were following social convention by refraining from acting the female roles themselves. Orgel suggests that the period literature leaves some small insight into the potential inner workings of the female audience member’s mind: she also found the cross-dressed boy sexually attractive. The trouble with this train of logic, however, is that it suggests that the primary experience for an audience member would be *sexual*. This argument degrades the boy actors beyond their obvious objectivity (as *performers* to be *visually consumed*); it relegates them as mere *sexual* objects. To be sure Orgel’s argument makes a compelling point—certainly there must have been *some* audience members (male and female) who did derive *some* sexual pleasure from their voyeurism. Before agreeing with Orgel’s interpretation wholesale, however, we must consider what his argument does to the practice of transvestism. Orgel seems to suggest that it is the nature of cross-dressing that elicits a sexual response from those observing the practice. He conflates stage practice and custom with gender and sexuality.

Recalling the transvestitic episode in Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Orgel concludes that the “...nature of love is to strive to be like the beloved; women are therefore best wooed by imitation. It is, indeed, precisely Pyrocles’ ability to perform as a woman that persuades Philocleia to love

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<sup>34</sup> Orgel, *Impersonations*, 72.

him.”<sup>35</sup> According to this conclusion, women would be sexually attracted to effeminate men simply because those men are more attuned to the needs of a woman; those men understand the inner workings of women and are therefore best equipped to both emotionally satisfy a woman as well as sexually satisfy her. Orgel explains: “For a female audience, in a culture as patriarchally stratified as that of Renaissance England, to see the youth in skirts might be to disarm and socialize him in ways that were specifically female, to see him not as a possessor or master, but as companionable and pliable and one of them—as everything, in fact, that the socialized Renaissance woman herself is supposed to be.”<sup>36</sup> Orgel argues that for the ideal early modern English woman, the ideal partner would be another ideal early modern English woman. She seeks an effeminate man who would without question understand her own struggle to submit herself properly to the patriarchy. The perfect man is a sensitive man who would serve as both her husband (with whom she could fulfill her procreative social responsibilities) and a best friend who might genuinely *care* about her in the way that she wishes to be cared for by a man. Orgel argues that we might see such a woman expressing this fantasy in *Twelfth Night*’s Olivia: “...in love with the boy/girl/eunuch Cesario/Sebastian, ‘maid and man’—she might, after all, have been paired off instead with the one ‘real’ man in the play, the fighter-pirate—and lover of boys—Antonio....”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the love matches in *Twelfth Night* might well be examined for the distinction between effeminate male love interests and the macho male love interests.

What Orgel does not acknowledge in this argument, however, is that the female-seeking-female desire is not as clearly *homosexual* as it may appear. For example, when he refers to Olivia’s desire for the disguised Viola, he does not mention Olivia’s own independence and

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<sup>35</sup> Orgel, *Impersonations*, 80.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

possible masculine gender. She is a woman who has enough freedom of will to reject otherwise appropriate male suitors. Unless and until she is matched with one of these men, Olivia is her own woman; she is, for all intents and purposes, an equal among them. Viola as Cesario is attractive to her because Viola represents femininity in her demeanor. She is not a convincing man; rather, she is often compared to an immature boy. If we were to apply Orgel's argument to this reading of *Twelfth Night*, we might come upon the paradox that suggests that masculinity and femininity are always already destined to seek one another, even in *homosexual* relationships. A truly feminine early modern English woman who found herself attracted to effeminate men for the sake of a mirrored femininity might actually be a prime example of narcissism rather than homosexual desire. If women are attracted to a version of their own understanding of femininity, then Orgel might as well be suggesting that women are simply attracted to themselves. Relying upon a gender model (masculine and feminine will always desire one another), this argument proves logically perplexing. Where is there room for homosexual attractions in an already-predetermined heterosexual understanding of gender and sexual desire?

In spite of Orgel's attempt to dispel homophobia, Traub finds that Orgel "...continue[s] to place homoeroticism within a category requiring ontological explanation and justification, in which traditional psychoanalytic interpretations are surprisingly reinstalled."<sup>38</sup> According to Traub, Orgel (in "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women," especially) ultimately plays directly into the hands of that system's homophobia, suggesting that one's sexuality and gender are immediately one in the same. Traub's main point, then, is that "[g]ender anxiety is no more, and no less, constitutive of homoerotic desire than it is of

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<sup>38</sup> Traub, "Friendship's Loss," 121.

heterosexual desire. A plenitude of desires are available as unconscious erotic modes within every psyche. Arbitrary divisions of desire into heterosexual and homoerotic are more indicative of socio-political prerogatives than of inherent psychic or biological imperatives.”<sup>39</sup> Although perhaps *some* male homoeroticism could serve as a reference point for a socio-political anxiety on the dangers of female sexuality, it is unreasonable to suggest that a fear of women’s sexual power would act as the source of male homoeroticism itself.

Traub even goes so far as to suggest that Orgel not only reinforces the patriarchy’s sense of homophobia, but he also “...follow[s] the lead of the anti-theatricalists in conflating the material reality of the boy actor with the play’s action” when he employs the term “transvestite theater.”<sup>40</sup> Conflating the behavior of transvestism with performance in general may lead to a faulty correlation between the two that could suggest the performance not of a fashion preference or a gender identity, but of a sexual one: “...transvestism does not correlate in a simple fashion with any particular erotic mode: theoretically, it could engender heterosexual as well as homoerotic desires.”<sup>41</sup> What Traub finds particularly troubling in this line of reasoning, then, is that neither transvestism nor homoerotic desires (or homosexual behavior, for that matter) are immediately related to one another. In fact, one might argue, it is the anti-theatricalists themselves who express the bulk of anxiety toward transvestism in any way (whether on stage or not), and even that is generalized to sexual desire *at all*.

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<sup>39</sup> Traub, 121.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



## Poor Monsters

Stubbes criticizes cross-dressing women in particular, not only calling them hermaphrodites but also casting them off as monsters.<sup>42</sup> Ambroise Paré dedicates an entire treatise to the medical study of hermaphrodites and “unnatural” creatures, declaring that those children born with “...additional members over and above the ordinary” are monstrous.<sup>43</sup> Monsters, he believes, are born to parents who have incurred the wrath of God for having sexual intercourse “...without respecting the time, or other laws ordained by God and Nature...”<sup>44</sup> Specifically, the child conceived during his mother’s menstrual flow will be born a monster as holy punishment. Viola regrets the impending love triangle of *Twelfth Night* and calls herself a “poor monster.”<sup>45</sup> She is monstrous because she represents both masculinity and femininity and cannot pursue a love match while straddling the gender binary. Drayton refers to the hermaphroditic mooncalf as “monstrous” because “[l]ike male and female, they be androgynes:/ The man is partly woman, likewise she/ Is partly man. [...] A feminine man, a woman masculine.”<sup>46</sup> Because the transvestite does not represent his or her sex according to early modern definitions, the transvestite is monstrous. The transvestite and the hermaphrodite represent two sides of the same coin: they are unclear and cannot be easily constrained by societal boundaries. These indefinable monsters are dangerous by what they represent in the early modern construction of human sexuality: they are uninhibited, unbridled sexuality.

In his second chapter, Bray examines the place that homosexuality and homosexual practices would have had in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English social structure;

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<sup>42</sup> Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, 38. According to Stubbes, women who change their clothing might as well be known as hermaphrodites, that is, “...Monsters of bothe kinds, halfe women, halfe men.”

<sup>43</sup> Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Twelfth Night*, 2.2.34.

<sup>46</sup> Drayton, “The Moon-Calf,” 171.

ultimately, he determines that homosexual behavior had less to do with an individual's sexual preference in a bedmate and more to do with a strong patriarchal structure built almost entirely on relationships of power.<sup>47</sup> If power is the source of these homosexual experiences between masters and servants, teachers and students, patrons and actors (and sometimes among actors of different statuses), then what do we make of the monster question? There is no denying the anxiety prevalent in early modern English literary sources that one practicing non-normative, non-hegemonic sex acts was in some way a monster—either the woman was actually a man, and that is why she cross-dressed, or the man was a monstrous hermaphrodite. In addition to an abuse of power relations (an individual sexually dominates the social inferior), there is more at play within these literary sources. Bray, however, warns against using only the literary sources and examines court records and population records to reveal the role human sexual development and deviance played outside of the city. In the particular case of young men, Bray determines that servants would have likely been the children of poorer families in a specific town or village, and it is fair to expect that these children would have experienced some sexual maturation while employed:

While it is very difficult now to discover what the age of sexual maturity was, clearly it would have been well before [the age of twenty]; and the constraints of the household would have governed a significant part of many individuals' lives long after puberty. For an unmarried servant living and working under the close discipline of a master in the same setting and with the same people, the confines

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<sup>47</sup> Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 56.

of the household might be expected to have put a severe limitation on the available sexual contacts.<sup>48</sup>

According to Bray's research, and we might determine this assessment to be fair, the lack of potential sexual contacts does not immediately suggest that an individual is absolutely homosexual; in fact, it seems to have been expected that the servants would have married once they were of age, regardless who they would have had sex with while employed in a household.<sup>49</sup> While a young servant explored his or her sexual response with a same-sex partner, the union would have generally been overlooked; according to Bray, "...for an unmarried servant homosexuality had certain advantages: it was less likely to arouse the interest of the local Justices of the Peace. ...[These] courts took a lively interest in cases of premarital heterosexual intercourse. ...[One] of the principal preoccupations of the Justices of the Peace was to see that illegitimate children did not fall on the poor rate."<sup>50</sup> As for the secular courts the greatest concern rested on the conception of extramarital offspring. Homosexual interaction, then, seems to have been a matter of course—either it was a social superior expressing his power over a social inferior with the surety of not conceiving bastards, or it was a form of sexual exploration on newly sexually matured unmarried servants. Either way, it *almost* appears harmless; if no one is hurt or complains, then there is little need for social attention or reform.<sup>51</sup>

The literary sources, however, seem to disagree—homosexual behavior was a concern that must have reached further than simple male posturing to establish dominance or “safe” forms of premarital sexual exploration.<sup>52</sup> According to the anxiety prevalent in the literary

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<sup>48</sup> Bray, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>52</sup> This is noted by Bray and Orgel in their individual discussions of the availability of boy prostitutes in the city and the multiple names appended to a man who participated in homosexual activities.

sources, human sexuality was a dangerous portion of one's social identity: if one did not fit into the mold of the heterosexual spouse and parent, then where did one fit into the society? An outsider would have been in effect a non-member of society, someone who existed outside of normative rules and jurisdiction, someone who was not governable or easily placed within the patriarchal social structure of power. Even more threatening to Christian social order is the possibility that an outsider would have lived his or her life in a more *natural* state, according to one's own desires and urges (which might as well be synonymous with sin). These outsiders were undeniably a perceived threat—could they influence others to become outsiders? If, as Stubbes worries, a woman can change her sexual identity as easily as she changes her dress, then certainly anyone could reveal a potential for innate hermaphroditism. Could it be that the anxiety was not that the sexual deviants intentionally shirked social norms but instead that they represented the truth that each and every one of us could just as easily do the same?

Although the pursuit of an individual identity served a specific purpose, it was not the endgame of the early modern Englishman and –woman. Rather, these individuals wanted to establish a specific type of identification in terms of cultural norms. Greenblatt explains that, “[where] the modern structuralist understanding of the world tends to sharpen its sense of individuation by meditating upon the normative, the Renaissance tended to sharpen its sense of the normative by meditating upon the prodigious.”<sup>53</sup> Greenblatt here points out that to the modern sense, the individual is set apart from the norm in terms of the norm—what is different is immediately given a sense of individuality. For early modern England, however, normative schema were drawn upon the backs of those that stood out—what is other does not belong to

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<sup>53</sup> Greenblatt, 77.

these specific qualities and characteristics of “normal.” The norm sought to maintain homogeneity apart from that which might distinguish itself as different.

In terms of the cross-dressing, supposed hermaphrodite at the turn of the seventeenth century, Greenblatt turns to the time’s expert on hermaphroditism, Jacques Duval, and his retelling of the case of Marie/Marin le Marcis and Jeane le Febvre. Both were servants to the same master and shared a bed, as was common practice—the latter a thirty-two-year-old widow with young children, and the former a twenty-something (wo)man. One night, as their friendship deepened, Marie le Marcis revealed that she was actually a man. Marie was in love with Jeane and wanted to marry her, but Jeane at first rejected Marie’s proposal; she eventually changed her mind, and against both their preferred wishes consummated their clandestine marriage. “Not content with secret vows and private pleasures,” Greenblatt recounts, “Marie and Jeane remained steadfast in their desire for the public confirmation of a wedding. But to acquire this confirmation, Marie le Marcis needed to acquire a new sexual identity in the eyes of the community; he had been baptized, named, dressed, and brought up as a girl. Accordingly, he changed his clothing, asked that he be called Marin le Marcis, and publicly declared his matrimonial intentions.”<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the couple did not find immediate public acceptance in Rouen, France, and both were arrested, tried and condemned: “...Marin to be burned alive, Jeane to watch the execution, then to be beaten and banished from Normandy. (After an appeal for mercy, the sentence was humanely moderated: Marin was only to be strangled to death, Jeane merely to be whipped).”<sup>55</sup> It should strike the reader as fairly obvious that Marie/Marin had been naïve in his hope that his fellow countrymen would have readily accepted his new (sexual)

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<sup>54</sup> Greenblatt, 73-4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 74.

identity. Despite cultural suggestions that clothing makes the man, Marin would need more proof than just an updated outward identity to allow him to legally marry Jeane.

Was Marie/Marin consciously attempting to craft a concept of identity independent of biology? How could Marie/Marin's sexual identity differ so greatly from the one so obviously presented physically? It seems that in this case we can observe signs of an attempted distinction between identity types. Physical identity would seem to exist solely in terms of one's physical attributes—whether or not one has a specific body part (or even multiple or missing body parts)<sup>56</sup>—offering a clear (one might assume) answer to the question: is one male or female? Sexualities and genders, however, demonstrate the murkiness of physical sexual identity through troubling (or troublesome) cases like Marie/Marin's—if an individual is born with female anatomy, surely that individual *should* prefer to dress effeminately, express herself effeminately, and sleep with those who have male anatomy. Obviously these assumptions are biased, unfair, and far too rigid to encompass the full spectrum of human sexualities and gender expressions. In Marie/Marin's case, we encounter the social (and legal) consequences involved with the very great danger of identifying in ways that challenge, subvert, or at least *question* social assumptions. When Marie told Jeane that she was actually a man and wished to legally change her name to Marin, could it have been because she wanted to avoid a lesbian love affair? (Such a concept would have likely been utterly foreign to both women as a sustainable lifestyle.) Could she have been attempting to “normalize” herself according to hegemonic discourses that refused to accept or even imagine alternative sexualities? Or could it have been that Marie, biologically male, wished to realign his physical structures with his gender identity as masculine? Marin was

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<sup>56</sup> In Chapter Two, I discuss in greater detail burgeoning early modern interest in hermaphrodites and its affect on identity-construction according to sexualities and genders.

sexually attracted to Jeane, fell in love with her, wished to marry her—and wanted all of these things to take place under a new, socially acceptable masculine identity.

Surprisingly, it was not Marie/Marin's transvestism (either as a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man) that ultimately upset the seventeenth-century French court; rather, it was the combined testimony of Marie/Marin's and Jeane's shared mistress and their master's mother that convicted the couple of sodomy: "...for both the wife and the mother of the man in whose household the couple had served testified that Marie le Marcis had regularly had her menstrual period..., and a medical examination revealed no signs of masculinity."<sup>57</sup> Pressed to defend himself against these allegations, Marin testified that "...as a consequence of the terror of imprisonment, his penis had retracted, but the court dismissed his claim. Marie, it was charged, was not a man but a 'tribade'—a homosexual seductress who had, with her unnaturally enlarged clitoris, abused the all-too willing Jeane."<sup>58</sup> The courts were less concerned with Marie le Marcis' transvestism and claim at masculinity than they were with the assumed sodomy required for two women to engage in sexual intercourse. (Recalling that "sodomy" referred to any sexual practice that could be defined as nonprocreative and nonnormative. In the case of two women engaging in sexual activities, they would have presumably required phallic sexual aids of some nature, which were apparently illegal.)<sup>59</sup> The saving grace in the le Marcis/le Febvre case was

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<sup>57</sup> Greenblatt, 74.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> According to Alan Bray in *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*: "So long as homosexuality was expressed through established social institutions, in normal times the courts were not concerned with it; and generally this meant patriarchal institutions—the household, the educational system, homosexual prostitution and the like. [...] Despite the contrary impression given by legal theorists, so long as homosexual activity did not disturb the peace or the social order, and in particular so long as it was consistent with patriarchal mores, it was largely in practice ignored. There was no systematic persecution, none of the periodic purges directed against homosexuality which were to be a feature of English society in the eighteenth century and later. In this respect, England may have differed from continental Europe.... What we see in the English material are rather isolated individuals who fell foul of the law in circumstances which were out of the ordinary, usually because their homosexual behaviour involved some breach of the peace: a yeoman farmer or a labourer who went too far in forcing his attentions on someone who was not interested, a man caught in his house with the son of a neighbour, an unpopular innkeeper, or a stranger in

the medical testimony provided by Jacques Duval, the local physician.<sup>60</sup> Following Marin's appeal, Duval examined him by physical probing (rather than merely observing, which other doctors appeared to have been satisfied to do), and he came to a fortunate conclusion: "...responding to his finger's pressure was 'a male organ, rather large and hard' (403); a second examination left no doubt, for the friction of the doctor's touch caused Marin to ejaculate, and the semen, he reports, was not thin and watery like a woman's but, like a man's, thick and white (404-5)."<sup>61</sup> After Duval's medical examination and testimony, "...the lovers' conviction was overturned. Marin and Jeane were released. The court evidently remained guardedly skeptical: Marin was ordered to wear women's clothes until he reached the age of twenty-five and was forbidden, on pain of death, to have sexual relations during this time with either sex."<sup>62</sup> The courts did not pass a ruling on whether or not Marin and Jeane would be permitted to marry after

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the neighbourhood. But these instances are representative of the working of the legal apparatus rather than the pattern of life in the everyday world. In general homosexual behaviour went largely unrecognized or ignored, both by those immediately involved and by the communities in which they lived; in this the individual and society were at one. When a prosecution for sodomy was brought it must have been a bewildering and shattering experience, but it was a very rare one" (74-5). It seems what was most troubling to the early moderns was rape and an abuse of power—essentially, crossing lines in a wholly dangerous and inappropriate way. Rather than legislate the sex act itself, the greatest concern for the English seemed to rest primarily on the disruption of real and established patriarchal concepts of *order*. These arguments are explored in greater detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>60</sup> Katherine Park offers additional insight on the Marie/Marin le Marcis case based upon a series of publications between Duval and Jean Riolan from 1612-1614 which challenged each other's conclusions on le Marcis's supposed hermaphroditism: "Duval held she was a male-dominated hermaphrodite and hence innocent of sodomy; Riolan argued that she was a woman and hence guilty. In his treatise [*Discours sur les hermaphrodits* (1614)], Riolan denied the existence of true hermaphrodites; he argued that most people identified as such—though not Marie, to whom he attributed a prolapsed uterus—were in fact *tribades*, with enlarged clitorises" ("The Rediscovery of the Clitoris" 179). Their opposing views revealed more than simple professional disagreement—each man takes the side of an entirely different medical model for viewing the human body from the other. "Duval subscribed generally to the theory of generation associated with Galen and Hippocrates, which interpreted hermaphrodites as beings of genuinely intermediate sex. [...] The tradition subscribed to by Duval...gave equal emphasis to both the maternal and paternal seed in generation and admitted a wide range of variation between the poles of the male and female" (180). According to Duval's interpretation of Galen and Hippocrates, Marie/Marin le Marcis's hermaphroditism is possible because of an unusual blending of male and female seed. Riolan, however, "...subscribed to Aristotle's highly dichotomized model of sex difference, which emphasized the absolute incommensurability of male and female. [...] According to this theory, women were not only radically different from men but also inferior; as Riolan put it, echoing Aristotle's famous formula, the female was an 'imperfect male'" (181). Fortunately for Marie/Marin le Marcis, Duval's testimony was sufficient to save him from death on account of sodomy.

<sup>61</sup> Greenblatt, 74.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*



he became “of age” (at least, according to the court’s standards); and, in fact, Greenblatt allows a moment to imagine the ending to this story, “[if] customary procedures for determining the gender of hermaphrodites were followed, at the end of the probationary period Marin would be permitted to choose once and for all a sexual identity.”<sup>63</sup> Greenblatt offers no word (perhaps there is none to offer) on whether or not Marin le Marcis had in fact menstruated; but, if he were truly a hermaphrodite as Duval’s findings suggest, then one might be able to imagine that he either possessed both male and female exterior genitalia, or that he possessed only the male external genitals and both male and female internal reproductive organs. The testimony of his mistress and master’s mother seems to fall short of claiming that Marin was in possession of a fully-formed vulva and labia; his female nature seems limited to a possibly enlarged clitoris and a menstrual cycle. In Marin le Marcis’ case, he emerges as a figure who troubles normative definitions of sexuality. If we cannot trust the physical representation of sex to define sex identity for us, then what can we use to construct this particular portion of the Self?

Greenblatt pushes his readers to consider that a sexual identity in early modern England (or France for that matter) would have been an integral part of individuation as a whole: “...a culture’s sexual discourse plays a critical role in the shaping of identity. It does so by helping to implant in each person a system of dispositions and orientations that governs individual improvisations, to implant, in other words, the defining off-center weight: ‘But nature to her bias drew in that’.”<sup>64</sup> By determining for its members what is natural and to what extent nature should determine orientation and identity at all, a culture simultaneously governs and restricts precisely in what way an individual cultivates the identity—if, for instance, a man wishes to wear dresses or enjoys sexual contact with other men, then that man is behaving against nature,

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<sup>63</sup> Greenblatt, 75.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Quotes *Twelfth Night*, 5.1.260.

which must mean that there is something inherently wrong with him. That man must then either defend his constructed identity (as a homosexual or as a transvestite, neither of which term would be familiar to the early modern Englishperson) or succumb to some form of “naturalization” much like Marin le Marcis experienced.

Greenblatt describes Nature’s instruction on what is appropriate sexual coupling in terms of “bias,” borrowing from both Shakespeare and early modern bowling terms:

...in *Twelfth Night* events pursue their natural curve, the curve that assures the proper mating of man and woman. To be matched with someone of one’s own sex is to follow an unnaturally straight line; heterosexuality, as the image of nature drawing to her bias implies, is bent. Shakespeare’s metaphor is from the game of bowls; the ‘bias’ refers not only to the curve described by the bowl as it rolls along the pitch but also to the weight implanted in the bowl to cause it to swerve. Something off-center, then, is implanted in nature—in Olivia’s nature, in the nature that more generally governs the plot of the comedy—that deflects men and women from their ostensible desires and toward the pairings for which they are destined.<sup>65</sup>

Greenblatt refers to Shakespeare’s Sebastian and his speech regarding the Nature of men and women; while this particular quote simply cannot represent an entire culture’s single and agreed-upon viewpoint, it does offer an interpretation that can serve to suggest that at least one person (and perhaps more) assumed there to be a particular natural inclination toward heterosexuality in men and women. The question, remains, however: what happens when a woman, such as

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<sup>65</sup> Greenblatt, 68. It may be ironic to the twenty-first century reader to recognize the concept that a man or woman who refuses to “bend” along with Nature and maintain a straight course is one who couples with same-sex partners; those who are not “straight,” then, are the ones who follow Nature’s winding path toward an opposite sex mate.

Rosalind for example, finds herself outside of the confines of a civilized culture that determines sexuality in rigid terms of what is “natural” and actually living within that very nature?

Contradicting Greenblatt’s point, Valerie Traub quotes an unpublished paper delivered in the 1989 Shakespeare Association of America meeting by Joseph Pequigney, explaining that he “offers an alternative interpretation of ‘nature to her bias’ which not only reopens the question of the meaning of ‘bias,’ but inverts its relation to ‘nature.’” He notes that ‘bias’ derives from:

the game of bowls played with a bowl or ball designed to run obliquely, and ‘bias’ denotes either the form of the bowl that causes it to swerve or, as in the metaphor, the curved course it takes. Nature then chose an oblique or curved rather than straight way of operating... This homoerotic swerving or lesbian [*sic*] deviation from the heterosexual straight and narrow is not unnatural, but, to the contrary, a *modus operandi* of Nature.

Despite its closure, then,” Traub continues, “*Twelfth Night*’s conclusion seems only ambivalently invested in the ‘natural’ heterosexuality it imposes.”<sup>66</sup> Whereas Greenblatt argues for a “bias” in Nature that determines one’s sexuality to bend toward procreative sexual behaviors and an off-center counterweight that runs one in a straight path against Nature toward homosexuality, Pequigney sees the bias working in the opposite way. Instead, he suggests that it is natural to swerve toward same-sex partners and is therefore against Nature to remain on the straight path toward heterosexuality. Although both arguments offer compelling cases for themselves, I am more inclined toward Pequigney’s, particularly for the purpose of my own theoretical approach in this dissertation. If we are to return to our basest, most natural state of being, one that is free

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<sup>66</sup> Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 138. Quotes Pequigney, “The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*,” unpublished manuscript presented to the Shakespeare Association of America, 1989, p. 11.

from Christian doctrines dictating “right” and “wrong” ways of pursuing sex partnerships, then we might find, as Rosalind and Orlando find, that what is Nature and what is Social do not entirely harmonize with one another. In fact, they seem disparate and at odds, even antagonistic toward one another. While the Social seeks to control and reign in Nature’s lawless inclinations, Nature runs wild and ignorant of doctrines and restrictions; Christian citizens in natural settings seem content enough to shirk their social requirements and embrace Nature’s freedom.

In “Early Modern: Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England,” Jonathan Dollimore explores gender identification in terms of social structure and finds that, “...the ideology of gender difference was just as fundamental as that of class in securing the social order. In fact patriarchy, class, and hierarchy all presupposed a law of gender difference which was at once divinely, naturally, and socially laid down, the law descending from the first through the second to the third.”<sup>67</sup> His point here suggests that if one were to attempt to craft a gender identity, one would first consult God’s law, then nature’s law, and finally secular law—and, one would hope, all three would be in line with one another, as God’s law informs the last two categories. In fact, Dollimore argues that in 1620, when King James I instructs the clergy to “suppress” women who cross-dressed, his deferral of legislative responsibility indicates his abdication of secular law to holy law. The king did reserve the right, however, to seek further justice if the clergy did not satisfactorily “...reproach the practice ‘vehemently and bitterly’.”<sup>68</sup> Such strong orders demonstrate the accepted belief that clothing created an identity, one that could be easily marked and judged by observers.

Exploring the term “cross,” Dollimore furthers this study of identity by suggesting that cross-dressing should not be limited just to the concept of cross-dressing between gender lines,

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<sup>67</sup> Dollimore, 289.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

but that anyone who crosses a social boundary in his or her clothing is in fact cross-dressing.<sup>69</sup> According to the anxiety prevalent in anti-theatricalist pamphlets, when one represents oneself in a manner that contradicts the reality (either by dressing according to fashion from another country or by using cosmetics to change one's appearance), one becomes an abomination to God's original plan. "A significant focus for the controversy was the theatre," Dollimore argues, "which, like the transvestite, was seen both to epitomize and to promote contemporary forces of disruption in and through its involvement with cross-dressing."<sup>70</sup> When actors portray characters that are outside of the actors' own social status (royalty, for instance), they are required to *imitate* or *impersonate*, to *cross-dress* as, a social superior—the potential for insult is incredibly high. Additionally, actors do not mimic these social superiors alone—they do so in front of impressionable audiences; audiences filled with peasants and commoners who might choose to cross-dress as well. According to Lisa Jardine, the perversion of cross-dressing was not limited to the immorality of transvestite apparel. Instead, Jardine explains, early modern English cross-dressing traipsed haphazardly over the so-called "natural" order of things, blurring lines of social distinction among men and women as well as social inferiors and social superiors. Jardine closely examines the 1597 sumptuary laws alongside well-known cases of cross-dressing as well as fictionalized ones represented in literature. Calling to mind Stubbes' *Anatomie of Abuses* and his denouncement of women wearing doublets, Jardine argues that, "[it] was not that the doublet was indecent—it was actually more decorous than a 'feminine' low-cut gown. But it was morally indecent because it announced absence of difference between the sexes in a language only too readily understood by a contemporary."<sup>71</sup> Although the social war waged against

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<sup>69</sup> Dollimore, 288.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>71</sup> Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*, 155.

opulent apparel among the classes not deemed “worthy” of wearing it, Jardine acknowledges a more deeply-rooted social anxiety that points to fears of gender delineation.

Men’s apparel began to take on an effeminate appearance, leaving them comparable to women; while women’s dress turned toward the masculine: “Male dress in the period became ornate, elaborate, contrived, and was openly called ‘effeminate’ by those of more modest tastes. Its attractiveness proved irresistible to women also, who in any case followed a French vogue for female dress, hairstyles and manners which emulated those of young boys.”<sup>72</sup> While the anxiety itself suggests a perverse trend toward the unnatural (in terms of physical sex delineation), Jardine is not convinced that the anxiety itself begins and ends with gender confusion. She argues instead that, as the sumptuary laws indicate, the anxiety surrounding women’s masculine apparel (and men’s effeminate apparel) smacks more directly of the break in social order; and, as the sumptuary laws make painstakingly clear, social order is to be treated with the utmost respect and consideration. She points out that, “[in] the natural order of things, the order which sumptuary law codifies in order of dress, woman is subject to man. The elimination of dress difference between men and women implies a narrowing of the gap between the man and his subordinate; that is the implied threat which is attacked in pamphlet after pamphlet addressed against fashionable excess in the early seventeenth century.”<sup>73</sup> The early modern Englishman has already been represented as a figure of extreme squeamishness when it comes to his countrymen and –women betraying social order—in fact, cross-dressing itself, much like the issues of sodomy and “homosexuality,” does not necessarily create social anxiety from experimental gender-bending. Instead, the real source of this anxiety is grounded in a lack of social distinction. If a woman is subject to a man, and a servant is subject to a master, then any

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<sup>72</sup> Jardine, 155.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

behavior that blurs these lines would certainly create social confusion. Cross-dressing is not as much a sexual issue as it is a social one; and, just as acts of sodomy with a servant do not immediately consign the early modern English master to the classification as homosexual, neither does cross-dressing immediately speak to gender preference.<sup>74</sup>

Stepping briefly backward to sixteenth-century France, Jardine points to Joan of Arc for the example of a woman who not only cross-dressed as a man but also as a peasant who cross-dressed as a knight.<sup>75</sup> Citing a Burgundian biographer from 1500 who seemed little impressed by Joan's fashion choices, Jardine argues that, "[by] adopting male dress of a lavishness which signalled superior class and authority, Joan took upon herself a kind of visual authority which overrode her womanhood and her inferior class origins. As the charges against her show, *both* these functions of her dress were seen as a blatant and unforgivable challenge to social and political order."<sup>76</sup> Joan represented social chaos: she not only upset the "natural" order (for women to be subservient to men), but she also apparently mocked even the secular order which mandated appropriate attire for each social class. A peasant girl dressing as a peasant boy is an infraction of one kind—she is overstepping her bounds as a woman socially beneath a man. A peasant girl dressing as a knight simultaneously discards two expectations—those of her sex as well as those of her social status. "For a woman to adopt male dress," Jardine explains, "was correspondingly to shift position in the social hierarchy; to move from subordination into equality with men."<sup>77</sup> Women (and even men) who overstep the social boundaries are the worst

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<sup>74</sup> Even in the ancient sense of the word, "sodomy" did not carry with it implications of sexual practice: "As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them" (Foucault 43, vol. 1, *The History of Sexuality*).

<sup>75</sup> Jardine, 156.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

kind of danger to society—they represent a potential breaking down of order and the ushering in of chaos:

[The adopting of male fashion by women figures in England and France] reiterates again and again... a sense of a breakdown of order between class and sex: male fashions are extreme and do not correlate with rank, turning acceptable lavishness into ‘effeminacy’ and ‘dissoluteness’; female fashions are close enough to men’s to give an uncomfortable sense of parity. In *Hic Mulier* one of the outrages in female dress treated is the wearing of spurs and ornamental daggers by women, that is, the bearing of arms (however figuratively). The woman ‘wears the spurs’... raising herself to authority comparable with her male equivalent. At the same time, the man adopts dress-weapons so ornate and lavish that they suggest decorativeness, not use, reducing male authority.<sup>78</sup>

While men in the appropriate rank were decorating the weapons only they were permitted to wear, women’s fashion began to allow (although against national legislation, particularly in early modern England) for weaponry of their own.

In much the same way, actors represented willful ignoring of sumptuary codes—while on stage, they could portray a knight, a king, a queen, or a peasant, regardless of their true social status. Dollimore argues that, “...the players were seen to undermine the idea that one’s identity and place were a function of what one essentially was—what God had made one. The idea of a God-given nature and destiny had the corollary that nothing so essentially predetermined could or should ever change.”<sup>79</sup> The social anxiety present here suggests that actors in some way or other serve the purpose of representing not only an opposition to God’s law but an active

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<sup>78</sup> Jardine, 158.

<sup>79</sup> Dollimore, 290.



subversion of it. Quoting John Cocks's essay "The Character of a Common Player," published in 1615, Dollimore explains further that:

Constant change was worse still; in the words of one satirist [John Cocks], the scandal of the player was not so much that he disguised his real self in playing; rather that he had no self apart from that which he was playing: "The Statute hath done wisely to acknowledge him a Rogue and errant, for his chiefe essence is, *A daily Counterfeit*... His [profession] is compounded of all Natures, all humours, all professions" (qtd. in Montrose, "The Purpose of Playing," 51 and 57). [...] Again, we see the same anxiety: social stability depended crucially on people staying just as they were (identity), where they were (location), and doing what they always had done (calling). When the rogue meets the player two lawless identities converge.<sup>80</sup>

Equating the rogue and the player as "two lawless identities" underscores the significance of identity in a legal sense—without a master, without a truly stable home, without a true profession to reinforce one's master and stable home, one is essentially a lost, lawless soul. Although these lost souls might encourage forth our greatest sympathies, truly they must be feared—these are souls who are not to be trusted. On one occasion, they may present one identity; on another occasion, another identity. These individuals are dangerous to a society so fixated on the identity of each member within the patriarchal stratum.

These player/rogues were dangerous; they inherently existed outside of the social hierarchy and were based entirely on mimicry. In fact, the players themselves (through the words of the playwright, naturally) reminded their audiences just how dangerous they were when

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<sup>80</sup> Dollimore, 290-1.

they continually compared the early modern stage to real English life. According to Dollimore, “...the world as a stage, life as artifice, and so on; these were ideas which the theatre derived from, as well as conveyed to, its culture.”<sup>81</sup> Theatres claimed to represent a reflection of a reflection of nature; thus, real English people should consider themselves actors as well. Citizens created and performed “artificial” social identities, which actors mimicked on the English stage. Identity was not, then, something that one could claim was naturally given; an Englishwoman was just as much an actor as the transvestite boy who mimicked her onstage. She performed according to social/natural/celestial requirements, all regardless whether or not she would have otherwise perceived herself in these qualifications if given the opportunity to explore other possible identities.

Those individuals who did, daringly, attempt to explore other identities often did so through an expression of clothing, which in turn suggested an expression of behavior (that exists today whether or not it is accurate): the transvestite may or may not have enjoyed homosexual behaviors, but the transvestite explored the social “opposite” or at least the social “different” by experimenting with apparel. Actors, closely related to street transvestites (sometimes accused of prostitution),<sup>82</sup> ignored social requirements and cross-dressed in spite of the rules, so that they unapologetically “...transgressed the natural and fixed order of things by wilfully confusing distinctions which it was thought imperative should be kept distinct, especially within the categories of rank, class, and gender.”<sup>83</sup> Wilfully confusing these distinctions Dollimore lists would set the stalwart Christian Englishperson into an anxious frenzy—what were these actors

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<sup>81</sup> Dollimore, 291. Louis Montrose states, “Because the stage play is both the product of a particular time and place and a circumscribed and reflexive space of representation, it may simultaneously exemplify and hold up to scrutiny the historically specific ‘nature’ that it mirrors; it bears the pressure of the time’s body but it may also clarify the form of the age” (43).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

suggesting by changing their social status and gender so easily and shamelessly? In many ways the actors were criticizing those social boundaries that glued early modern England together. They pushed those boundaries to explore the possible consequences of disruption and intentional ignorance.

“One further aspect of dress violation associated with the theatre also contravened divine and natural law,” reminds Dollimore: “the abomination of boys dressing as girls.”<sup>84</sup> Worse still than cross-dressing according to social boundaries is the dressing across gendered boundaries. According to John Rainoldes, a well-known Calvinist theologian, “...the boy transvestite destroyed the fragile moral restraint containing an anarchic male sexuality; the boy incited his male audience into every kind of sexual excess. Rainoldes seems to have imagined adult male sexuality not just as anarchic, but as satanically polymorphous, capable of engaging in the forbidden with alarming ease. So, in seeing the transvestite boy, the male member of the audience might be moved to lascivious thoughts about women, which then transfer to the boy himself.”<sup>85</sup> Rainoldes may well represent at least the opinion of a portion of the early modern English audience: visually witnessing transvestism and the real transformation of a boy into a woman (at least, according to the social anxiety running rampant among early modern English people sympathetic to Rainoldes’ fears) could send the heterosexual (maybe even married) male audience member into a sexual frenzy. If another grown man (playing a lead male part) kisses this young boy dressed as a woman (playing a lead female part), then perhaps this demonstration would not just encourage but actually *force* the unbridled sexual response to issue forth from the Englishman who would then have little control to prevent his lascivious nature from seeking out that particular boy transvestite, cross-dressed as a woman.

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<sup>84</sup> Dollimore, 292.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 292-3.

## The Sexuality of Cross-Dressing

Just as dangerous as the cross-dressed boy was his stigmatized social counterpart: the ganymede.<sup>86</sup> The equivalent to a catamite in early modern England, a ganymede was the epitomized object of desire. Boys who stood as the objects of male desire were not suddenly novel in the early modern period; indeed, the ancients would have likewise been familiar with the love of boys. For the Greeks in particular, Foucault explains that the bodies of boys “...were appreciated in themselves or in their juxtaposition with the signs and guarantees of a developing virility.”<sup>87</sup> The Greeks seem to have derived most sexual pleasure from dominating the submissive boy, perhaps even in coaxing his potential masculinity out of him. Foucault recounts the relationship between the lover and the boy as a game with specific rules; the boy was not to give his love too freely nor to hastily, and the lover would return in kind with a shower of gifts. “[T]he boy was expected to give—out of kindness and hence not for his own pleasure—something that his partner sought with a view to the pleasure he would enjoy; but the partner could not rightfully ask for it without a matching offer of presents, services, promises, and commitments....”<sup>88</sup> The reciprocity in place between the two male lovers established proper social roles: one was the *agent* who initiated sex acts and lavished praise upon the other who was

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<sup>86</sup> Bray offers the following definition: “The word is nearly always pejorative, and often refers to nothing more elevated than a male prostitute or a servant kept for sexual purposes; and yet, its original meaning, the beautiful boy who was loved by divine Zeus, could never wholly be shaken off” (65).

<sup>87</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, 200.

<sup>88</sup> Foucault, vol. 2, 224. In fact, Foucault explains, “...young men were recognized as objects of pleasure—and even as the only honorable and legitimate objects among the possible male partners for men: no one would ever reproach a man for loving a boy, for desiring and enjoying him, provided that the laws and proprieties were respected. But on the other hand, the boy, whose youth must be a training for manhood, could not and must not identify with that role. He could not of his own accord, in his own eyes, and for his own sake, be that object of pleasure, even though the man was quite naturally fond of appointing him as an object of pleasure” (221). Although boys could take pleasure in *giving* pleasure to their lovers, it would have been improper and troubling for them to have taken pleasure in being the *object* of another man’s desire. Such an acceptance of pleasure from a grown man might lead to troubling conclusions of his own ability to derive pleasure from dominating sexual objects (such as women and other boys) when he later grows into his manliness.

the *object* of desire and who derived pleasure from giving pleasure.<sup>89</sup> For the early moderns, the employment of a ganymede would not have been sufficient evidence to find homosexuality in the man who hires him; the desire of a ganymede would have seemed similar in nature to the desire of a woman.<sup>90</sup> Nora Johnson points out in “Ganymedes and Kings,” that rather than accept the ganymede as a representation of accepted early modern homosexual practices, we should consider instead that, “...his participation in the homoerotic is taken to be a function of his youth, rather than some expression of essence or nature. In some accounts the ganymede himself desires a woman, while an adult male desires him.”<sup>91</sup> Ganymedes were attractive more for their *youthfulness* and less for their *maleness*.<sup>92</sup> As stated earlier, it was the objectification of a particular sexual body as weaker and submissive to the stronger (masculine) body. “[The object of desire] registers...in the body of the ganymede,” Johnson argues, “the partner who, like a woman in a heterosexual coupling, might be said to lack power. The sodomite has the ability to

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<sup>89</sup> In an interview with Michel Foucault conducted by Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus in April of 1983, Foucault expanded upon this notion of reciprocity in the system of Greek men loving boys. Asked whether homosexual love was “better” in ancient Greece than it is “now,” Foucault responds: “It might look that way. Since there is an important and large literature about loving boys in Greek culture, some historians say, ‘Well, that’s the proof that they loved boys.’ But I say that proves that loving boys was a problem. Because if there were no problem, they would speak of this kind of love in the same terms of love between men and women. The problem was that they couldn’t accept that a young boy who was supposed to become a free citizen could be dominated and used as an object for someone’s pleasure. A woman, a slave, could be passive: such was their nature, their status. All this reflection, philosophizing about the love of boys—with always the same conclusion ‘please, don’t treat a boy as a woman’—is proof that they could not integrate this real practice in the framework of their social selves. You can see through a reading of Plutarch how they couldn’t even imagine reciprocity of pleasure between a boy and a man. If Plutarch finds problems in loving boys, it is not at all in the sense that loving boys was anti-natural or something like that. He says, ‘It’s not possible that there could be any reciprocity in the physical relation between a boy and a man’” (“On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of a Work in Progress,” 344-345). The pleasure that was reciprocated, then, would not have been mutual sexual satisfaction—surely only the man, the active sexual partner, would have experienced sexual satisfaction. Instead, the boy as an object would be pleased at receiving praise and gifts from his adult sexual partner. Foucault acknowledges that such a relationship was problematic to the Greeks for its potential to mistreat a future free citizen.

<sup>90</sup> This is not to suggest, however, that the early moderns were altogether untroubled by the presence or hire of a ganymede. Indeed, chastity in all respects was preferred. Rather, it should be noted that a man who employed the sexual services of a boy prostitute would not have *necessarily* preferred the sexual company of men in general. Because the early moderns did not have the same sense of sexuality as we have today, homosexual practices did not immediately suggest *homosexuality*.

<sup>91</sup> Johnson, “Ganymedes and Kings,” under section 1.

<sup>92</sup> We might suppose that the chastity of young girls was far more valued than that of young males; virgin women were prized as wives, while young males might have been regarded as sexual “practice” in premarital intercourse.

change shapes at will; the ganymede, like the woman, is shaped by the sodomite's gaze into a static embodiment of that fluid will."<sup>93</sup> The role of the sexual object was not delineated along sex lines: either boys or women could easily be considered desirable.<sup>94</sup> This phenomenon, then, appears to flow naturally from heteronormative hegemonic constructs of desire: the masculine seeks the feminine (or perhaps just the effeminate).<sup>95</sup>

While the study of homosexuality and its presence in early modern England is certainly useful, we must be cautious in our conceptualization of what "homosexuality" means. To suggest that the masculine will always seek the feminine merely supports heteronormative ideas of "natural" desire. Perhaps rather than finding the young boy attractive for his effeminacy (or even his underdeveloped masculinity), the "sodomite" is actually attracted to *inexperience*.<sup>96</sup> It is the virgin girl who is revered, exalted to such a degree that even her future marriage hinges upon the simple question of her sexual inexperience.<sup>97</sup> To use "sodomite" in Johnson's terms is to support anachronism: in the modern sense of the word, it is generally used to describe someone who participates in anal intercourse.<sup>98</sup> In this case, then, the sodomite might be more akin to modernity's "lecher," someone who appears to have little regard for social convention in

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<sup>93</sup> Johnson, under section 2. Here, Johnson uses the term "sodomite" to signify the men who both initiate and hire sexual intercourse with the ganymede or woman.

<sup>94</sup> Orgel, *Impersonations*, 70-1.

<sup>95</sup> Foucault warns against reading the Greeks' love of boys as a replacement for the love of women. He argues that "...it would be a mistake to think that [their] traits were valued because of what they shared with feminine beauty" (200, vol. 2). According to Foucault, the Greeks acknowledged a sexual attraction to the young male body that existed on its own merit without taking into account its similarities with the mature female body.

<sup>96</sup> Examining Galen's *On the Affected Parts*, Foucault points out that the ancient Greeks likewise preferred inexperience. When a young boy became sexually active, he began to show signs of masculinity—presumably, it was the sexual act itself that spurred on his puberty (118, vol. 3, *The History of Sexuality*).

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, the near-tragic element to Hero and Claudio's wedding in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Convinced he has evidence of Hero's infidelity, Claudio refuses to marry her: "What a Hero hadst thou been,/ If half thy outward graces had been plac'd/ About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!/ But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! Farewell,/ Thou pure impiety and impious purity!" (4.1.99-103) Hardly given the opportunity to defend herself, Hero's word proves insubstantial in the face of what Claudio believes he has witnessed (actually the love-making of Margaret and Borachio).

<sup>98</sup> To the early modern Englishman or -woman, however, as Bray reminds us, "sodomy" referred to individuals (of either sex) who were engaged in any nonprocreative, extramarital sex act (16).

the bedroom and who shows a propensity for unrestrained sex acts. “Ganymede” and “sodomite,” therefore, do not easily fit within the homosexual category; they are instead terms meant to distinguish sexual behavior and not immediately to suggest sexual *preference*.

The cross-dressed female who elicits sexual response from a male does not herself represent latent homosexual desires. Instead, she serves as a reminder for that which the observer (the one who desires her) most likely finds appealing: *sexual innocence*. In the cases of Viola as Cesario and Rosalind as Ganymede in particular, the boys they claim to represent are in fact sexually inexperienced. Viola’s Cesario is a eunuch<sup>99</sup> and is repeatedly described as effeminate and young.<sup>100</sup> Rosalind chooses the name Ganymede presumably because it will elicit recollections of Zeus’ beautiful boy, someone both effeminate and youthful.<sup>101</sup> Because the women are using their disguises for the purposes of survival (as unattached women in foreign patriarchies), they purposefully align themselves with images of immature masculinity in order to play the part convincingly. Just as the women do not attempt to deceive their male love interests into participating in homoerotic (albeit still heteronormative) sexual behaviors, the men themselves (particularly Orsino and Orlando) are not represented as potential homosexuals. The plays themselves do not allude to homoerotic tendencies between the men and cross-dressed women—in fact, Orsino refuses to marry Viola until he has seen her in a gown, and Orlando

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<sup>99</sup> For more on Cesario as a eunuch, see Orgel’s “Call me Ganymede,” in *Impersonations*, especially pages 53-57.

<sup>100</sup> Viola decides to take on the role as Orsino’s eunuch not because she seeks to attract him with her femininity but because she can sing (1.2.59-60). Orsino describes Cesario in strictly feminized terms (1.4.33-39). Maria finds him “...a fair young man...” (1.5.101). Malvolio describes Cesario as one whose “...mother’s milk were/ scarce out of him” (1.5.160-1).

<sup>101</sup> Rosalind’s attachment to the name “Ganymede” is less concerned with the early modern understanding of the word and more focused instead on a sort of arrogance: “I’ll have *no worse* name than Jove’s own page, / And therefore look you call me Ganymede” (1.3.121-2, emphasis mine). In fact, the name “Ganymede” does not elicit commentary from the other characters; nobody seems to notice that Ganymede is named for Zeus’ page and might have dubious sexual innuendo.

seems to have never had any awareness of Rosalind's disguise as Ganymede.<sup>102</sup> Although the potential for homoeroticism exists within these plays, they provide tension rather than conclusive evidence that cross-dressing immediately leads to homosexuality. We must bear in mind the culture within which these plays were written: Shakespeare was a product of the early modern social atmosphere. Although he certainly challenged many social mores within his works, in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* in particular, he "corrects" these comedies of errors in order to reinforce the heteronormative patriarchal system of sexual attraction and desire.

### "Natural" Inclinations

To look through the propaganda put out by many of England's early modern pamphleteers, one would come to the conclusion that what is naturally within human nature (human sexual urgings in particular) represents that which is chaotic, fallen, wild, confused, and confusing. Human nature outside of social norms, mores, and regulations, is disordered and must be restricted in some form or another. Nature must be contained, must be restrained; if it will not comply with the rules and strictures imposed upon it by Society, then it must be eradicated, dominated. When one finds oneself living according to one's nature, then one will *naturally* be led to challenge or threaten social order. Not all early moderns would agree with these extreme views; some, like Montaigne, would seem to argue if not for the true opposite than at least for a more moderate comprehension of ways humans can exist in this world. What should shock, and surely confound, today's scholars is the apparent attitude the early moderns

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<sup>102</sup> It is truly only other female characters who are inclined to homoerotic couplings (finding the effeminate nature of the "boys" attractive). Viola and Rosalind struggle to extricate themselves from potential love matches with Olivia and Phoebe respectively, instead encouraging them to find genuinely male replacements. Their replacements, however, are similar to the original love interests: Viola apparently performs an uncanny impression of her twin brother Sebastian who replaces her with little fuss, while Rosalind replaces herself with the weak-willed, arguably effeminate shepherd Silvius. This is examined further in Chapter Three.



had toward human sexual response—while at once denouncing non-procreative sex acts as sodomy (for instance, using dildos during lesbian sexual intercourse was far worse than the intercourse itself between the two women), the pamphleteers seem to suggest a concept that desiring to participate in non-procreative sexual acts is a *natural* inclination. In fact, it is this very nature that society seeks to fight against—*because* it is natural, it risks encouraging chaos, disorder, and subversion. Only by coming to grips with a properly fitting early modern definition of “nature” can we hope to understand not only stage cross-dressing in England, but likewise the cross-dressing of male and female characters within the dramas themselves. This is not necessarily an act of homosexuality, but it is rather, according to early modern writers, a shirking of social requirements and boundaries in order to return to one’s natural state.

## Chapter Two

### Monsters

How does Nature (natural tendencies and inclinations in particular) resist definitions as provided by the patriarchy? In what ways can biology lead to greater confusion rather than clear-cut explanations? The danger in a biology that is not clear-cut, that does not observe hegemonic normative rules of sex and gender, rests squarely on the shoulders of the society which interprets that biology as dangerous. Scholars must now examine the tautology of the early modern patriarchal systems that created the danger they so greatly feared. In the case of hermaphrodites, for instance, even Galenic physical standards resist patriarchal structures and suggest that the natural, the human, the undefined, uncontrolled is chaotic and wild.<sup>1</sup> In early modern France,<sup>2</sup> for instance, parents of hermaphrodites could suffer the wrath of God for some

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<sup>1</sup> According to Kim Phillips in “Masculinities and the Medieval English Sumptuary Laws,” patriarchy exists in order to control those that are not men, which she defines as “homosociality”: “[it]...refers to social bonds between men, where women are primarily functional. Western social structures are organised homosocially and use of this term helps us to see the gendered nature of hierarchies. Perhaps there is no such thing as class, only struggles, alliances and compromises between men. I do mean men, not the human race in general. Women and children are always adjuncts, accessories, presumed to share all the status and preoccupations of the men with whom they are associated—and of course they are often complicit” (24).

<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to explore the French examples of actual cases on hermaphroditism because the literature itself is so pervasive and influential; although this argument might seem tautological (it is important because it is important), the early modern French physicians wrote a great deal on causal relationships between the birth of a hermaphroditic child and the choices of the parents (or particularly the mother). As Katherine Park points out, “The great interest of these French sources lies in the fact that they were the first postclassical European medical texts to accord significant visibility to sexual contacts and sexual desire between women; whereas men occasionally figured in medieval medical discussions of what was construed as the ‘unnatural’ sexual habits and anatomy that led men to seek out sex with other men, and such discussions tended to deemphasize women or elide them altogether” (172). Starting with an examination of women’s sexuality when exploring the relationship between cross-dressers and hermaphrodites almost seems par for the course; the apparent connection can be observed in Ambroise Paré’s *On Monsters and Marvels* (1573): “Having begun with hermaphrodites, defined as beings with ‘two genitals [*sexes*] in a single body,’ Paré moved without discernible transition first to women with enlarged labia, as ostensibly described

sin they may have committed when the child was conceived.<sup>3</sup> Early modern hermaphrodites offer a fascinating intersection in the discussion that attempts to merge a fluctuating sense of sexual identity and gender identity.<sup>4</sup> These hermaphrodites possess a biology that is naturally “unnatural”—they are monstrous in their dual representation of both sexes existing simultaneously in a single body. When these natural “unnaturals” attempt to express themselves sexually, the trouble of homosexuality crashes to the fore. According to Paré, for instance, the hermaphrodite is labeled male or female, masculine or feminine, once he or she has specified which sex organ is preferable during intercourse.<sup>5</sup> What Paré and others like him ultimately

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by Greek medical authors, then to Leo Africanus’s diviners of Fez and their clients, to whom Leo had attributed no genital irregularity, and finally to an apparent recommendation for clitoridectomy, taken from another section entirely of Leo’s work. This loose set of associations, between hermaphrodites, women with enlarged genitals, female homoeroticism, and clitoridectomy was not idiosyncratic but figured in a number of French medical works both before and after Paré’s...” (172). Park argues that the crux of early modern French interest in hermaphrodites and women’s sexuality lies in the rediscovery of the clitoris. In some cases, such as Marie/Marin le Marcis’s (discussed in Chapter One), the question of an individual’s apparent hermaphroditism could be explained by an enlarged clitoris that resembles a penis.

<sup>3</sup> Paré offers clear reasons for parents to birth a hermaphroditic child: “It is certain that most often these monstrous and marvelous creatures proceed from the judgment of God, who permits fathers and mothers to produce such abominations from the disorder that they make in copulation, like brutish beasts, in which their appetite guides them, without respecting the time, or other laws ordained by God and Nature: as it is written in Esdras the Prophet (Ch. 5, Book 4), that women sullied by menstrual blood will conceive monsters. Similarly, Moses forbids such coupling in Leviticus (Chapter 16). Also, the ancients observed through long experiences that the woman who will have conceived during her period will engender those inclined to leprosy, scurvy, gout, scrofula, and more, or subject to a thousand different diseases: the more because a child conceived during menstrual flow takes its nourishment and growth—being in its mother’s womb—from blood that is contaminated, dirty, and corrupt, which having established its infection in the course of time, manifests itself and causes its malignancy to appear.... The conclusion is that it is a filthy and brutish thing to have dealings with a woman while she is purging herself” (5).

<sup>4</sup> To Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity*, the hermaphrodite has traditionally been used for another purpose: to serve as proof of a separate and third sex. “Many historians of sexuality use the category of hermaphrodite as a synonym for a third sex because in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the notion of a third sex emerged not only as a physical explanation for so-called same-sex behavior but also as the believed consequence of self-pollution. Seventeenth and eighteenth century anatomists seemed much more interested in the category of the female-to-male hermaphrodite than in the male to female hermaphrodite because it was presumed that nature tends toward perfectibility and the female form is always figured as the imperfect version of the male” (59-60).

<sup>5</sup> Halberstam resists this binary classification of gender: “On the one hand, we do not name and notice new genders because as a society we are committed to maintaining a binary gender system. On the other hand, we could also say that the failure of ‘male’ and ‘female’ to exhaust the field of gender variation actually ensures the continued dominance of these terms. Precisely because virtually nobody fits the definition of male and female, the categories gain power and currency from their impossibility. In other words, the very flexibility and elasticity of the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ ensures their longevity” (27). She points to *Saturday Night Live*’s “It’s Pat” skit that played upon ambiguity in genders to force other characters into uncomfortable situations for the sake of a good laugh. Halberstam’s point here is valid: unless and until we embrace a less dichotomous understanding of gender construction, particularly one based almost entirely on body parts, we will continue to alienate those who feel “not

assume is that the expression of sexual preference (enjoying sexual gratification with one specific type of sexual partner over another)<sup>6</sup> links intrinsically to preference in gender expression (where one feels most comfortable on the masculine – feminine continuum).

Despite the clear groundwork historicists have provided the subsidiary study of cross-dressing, the foundation has the potential to simplify an inherently complex issue: human sexuality and gender expression.<sup>7</sup> According to Mario DiGangi, “[c]oncepts like ‘homosexual’ or ‘gay’ imply a shared trait of desire or behavior that defines a class of people despite differences of status, class, race, or gender. Even to say ‘I am gay’ requires interlocking notions of sexual identity (*gay* is a minority political classification), sexual orientation (*am* implies an ontology), and sexual discourses of (homo)sexual identity, sexual orientation, or the rhetorical stance taken in relation to such an identity or orientation (‘outness’) did not exist in the Renaissance.”<sup>8</sup> Should we then take to mean that our “sexual subjectivity,” that is the sexual identity<sup>9</sup> we craft for ourselves as active subjects, likewise limits us or *subjects* us to concepts of

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quite” male or female “enough.” And, as Halberstam states in the above quote, it is possible that there is an overwhelming majority of individuals who struggle against what it means to be an individual man or woman in this dual-gender world. In this way we might come to realize that, except in some circles that discuss the subject, our social understanding of gender and sexuality is nearly as limited and limiting as it was hundreds of years ago.

<sup>6</sup> That is to suggest that there are only three types of couplings: those between one man and one woman, those between one man and one man, and those between one woman and one woman. The trouble with this assumption is that it leaves no room available to the potential for bisexuality (a sexual preference grounded in sexual gratification from either sex, presumably in favor of seeking gratification in a *person* rather than in a specific *sex organ*), as well as the potential for myriad forms of other couplings (multiple partners, open relationships, group sex acts, etc.). For the sake of ease, I will attempt to focus on the first, more normative concepts of sexuality as an expression of preference according to sex-specific and monogamous guidelines.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Dollimore reminds us in *Sexual Dissidence* that, “...to cross is not only to traverse, but to mix (as in to cross-breed) and to contradict (as in to cross someone); also that cross-dressing potentially involves both inversion and displacement of gender binaries” (288). Cross-dressing was never, and is not now, a simple expression of sexual preference. Rather, it is a practice that involves both the “crossing-over” of gender-specific boundaries but also the dissolution of those boundaries in favor of calling them into question and potentially refiguring them in more complex ways.

<sup>8</sup> Mario DiGangi. *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> When I use the term “sexual identity,” I mean to conjure the complex intersections of sociosexual constructs with the agency subjects employ when crafting a specific “identity.” In the case of “sexual identity,” the acting subject is incapable of self-identifying without utilizing terms and concepts already socially defined. Should the subject mean to create a sexual identity based on gender and/or sexual orientation, then the subject is forced to use terms, definitions, and parameters that have been socially predetermined. The same is true if the subject intends to identify

sexuality? Are we limited to constructing notions of whom we prefer to sleep with and how we prefer to express our gender identity? These questions are still under scrutiny in the twenty-first century and were not fully formed in the seventeenth. Twenty-first century scholars have the benefit of a century of scholarship to rely upon—because of the work done by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century historicists, the twenty-first century scholars are free to complicate the issues raised by their predecessors.

The issue that problematizes the concept of sexual identity and sexuality the greatest seems to be that of gender expression. It exists on a continuum between effeminacy and masculinity independent from the sexual continuum; no two identities may be immediately linked with the same gender expression. DiGangi points out that “...Renaissance discourses define ‘effeminacy’ as the ‘womanish’ sensuality that might cause a man to indulge an excessive desire for women or boys.”<sup>10</sup> He continues, “...in the sixteenth century, male effeminacy was understood to cause heteroerotic or homoerotic *disorder*.”<sup>11</sup> Because the early moderns did not have a specific term for homosexuality, or even an understanding of different sexual attractions that were *not* disruptive to social norms, the concept that a man’s masculinity could be diminished by *any* disruptive sexual behavior (to include homoerotic, bestial, and incestuous couplings) indicates that gender and sexual identity are not inextricably linked.<sup>12</sup> He continues

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a sexuality that is based in lack (as in asexuality) or even to identify a gender that is neither fully masculine nor feminine; in this case the subject must first identify the sexuality or gender that he or she is opposing, and second the subject is able to attempt to label this identity still within predetermined sociosexual paradigms.

<sup>10</sup> DiGangi, 5. Clearly, to the early moderns, there was a limit to appropriate sex acts—it seems under this definition that even a married couple who enjoyed sexual intercourse to be considered “excessive” would represent a chaotic, uncontrolled element of sexual activity. Although the line is ostensibly obscure, we might suppose it rests within limits of procreative sex acts—to the extent that a couple attempted reproduction, sexual activity was appropriate. Perhaps activity beyond that limit was “excessive.”

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. Emphasis mine.

<sup>12</sup> According to DiGangi’s argument: “Homophobic appropriations of queer imagery operate under the premise that ‘we all know’ what sodomy looks like—and it isn’t pretty. Similarly, the Renaissance category of sodomy derived its stigmatizing power from threateningly exotic significations: the sodomite was devil, heretic, New World savage, beastly defiler of boys, whores, and goats. By contrast, there is a relative paucity of specific imagery and language

to say that, “[s]odomy’ signifies ‘male-male sex’ in its totality no more than ‘incest’ signifies ‘male-female sex’ in its totality. One early modern definition of ‘adultery’ illustrates how evaluations of sexual morality might be founded in a distinction between orderly and disorderly behaviors more so than between heteroerotic and homoerotic behaviors.”<sup>13</sup> The fault lies with the continuum of human sexuality—if human sexuality existed in a linear, historicize-able, easily-discussed genealogical plane, then these definitions would not nearly be as fluid or confusing as they have always been.

### Early Modern Marvel: The Story of “Bearded Mary”

In September 1580, Montaigne traveled through France on his way to Switzerland. On his travels, he happened upon the small town of Vitry-le-François where the townspeople regaled Montaigne and his company with three fascinating stories of their neighbors, two of which reflect the sixteenth-century social anxieties surrounding gender identity, sexual preference, and physical sex. The first of the two stories regards a group of several runaway girls who chose to cross-dress and create new lives for themselves:

Seven or eight girls around Chaumont-en-Bassigni plotted together a few years ago to dress up as males and thus continue their life in the world. One of them came to this place [Vitry-le-François] under the name Mary, earning her living as a weaver, a well-disposed young man who made friends with everybody. At the

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associated with orderly homoerotic desire in early modern England. The specificity, strangeness, and variety of sodomitical images doubtless contributes to our continued fascination with them” (13). The assumption that “we all know” and can define sodomy in simple terms, attempting to boil down the practice and label it according to its “pure essence” suggests that there is a concrete way to understand sodomy in the first place. Because human sexuality is an ever-evolving, ever-fluctuating concept, we may never be satisfied with our definition of “sodomy.”

<sup>13</sup> DiGangi, 18. DiGangi references William Perkins’ *The Foundation of Christian Religion* (1616) for this definition: “...to commit adultery, signifieth as much, as to doe any thing, what way soever, whereby the chastitie of our selves, or our neighbors may be stained.”

said Vitry, he became engaged to a woman who is still alive, but because of some disagreement that arose between them, their compact went no further. Later he went to...Montier-en-Der, still earning his living at the said trade, and fell in love with a woman, whom he married and with whom he lived for four or five months, to her satisfaction, so they say. But she was recognized by someone from the said Chaumont, the matter was brought before justice, and she was condemned to be hanged, which she said she would rather undergo than return to a girl's status; and she was hanged for using illicit devices to supply her defect in sex.<sup>14</sup>

Although Mary was offered an opportunity to avoid death by hanging if she would only return to the attire of her "natural" sex, she refused this bargain and was put to death for the apparent use of a sexual aid to make up for her lack of a penis.<sup>15</sup> It is remarkable that Mary was not hanged because she wore men's clothing or even that she caused others to believe she was a man; neither was she hanged simply for engaging in a sexual relationship with a woman (which, according to the townspeople who related the tale to Montaigne, was satisfying for Mary's wife). No, Mary

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<sup>14</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, "Across France toward Switzerland (September 4-28, 1580)," 5-6.

In the original French, Montaigne recounts the story thus: "Sept ou huit filles d'autour de Chaumont en Bassigni complottèrent, il y a quelques années, de se vestir en males et continuer ainsi leur vie par le monde. Entre les autres, l'une vint en ce lieu de Vitry sous le nom de Mary, guaignant sa vie à estre tisseran, jeune homme bien conditionné et qui se rendoit à un chacun amy. Il fiancea audit Vitry une femme, qui est encore vivante; mais pour quelque desaccord qui survint entre eux, leur marché ne passa plus outre. Depuis estant allé audit Montirandet, guignant tousjours sa vie audit mestier, il devint amoureux d'une fame laquelle il avoit espousée, et vescu quatre ou cinq mois avecque elle avec son contentement, à ce qu'on dit; mais ayant esté reconnu par quelqu'un dudit Chaumont et la chose mise en avant à la justice, elle avoit esté condamnée à estre pendue: ce qu'elle disoit aymer mieux souffrir que de se remettre en estat de fille. Et fut pendue pour des inventions illicites à suppléer au defaut de son sexe" (Montaigne *Oeuvres Complètes* 1118).

<sup>15</sup> Violence done against those who fall "outside" of hegemonic norms was not isolated to the early modern period, of course; this is nothing new. Butler reminds us: "The social punishments that follow upon transgressions of gender include the surgical correction of intersexed persons, the medical and psychiatric pathologization and criminalization in several countries including the United States of 'gender dysphoric' people, the harassment of gender-troubled persons on the street or in the workplace, employment discrimination, and violence" (*Undoing Gender* 55). In her book, Butler recounts the traumatic story of David (raised Brenda after a botched corrective surgery on his penile foreskin at the age of eight months) who was forced to undergo sex reassignment therapies for his entire childhood. David was eventually released from these "therapies" and could return to his life as a man; sadly, he committed suicide in 2004. For more on David's story, see Butler's "Doing Justice to Someone."

was hanged because she employed the use of a dildo, thereby participating in sodomitical sex practices—obviously, the couple was not seeking to procreate in their sex act and were likewise using “unnatural” implements to “supply [the] defect.”<sup>16</sup> It is not clear whether or not Mary’s wife ever realized that she was married to a woman, but what is clear is the purpose of sharing this story with Montaigne and his traveling companions. The citizens of Vitry-le-François welcomed Montaigne’s party and intended to regale them with “memorable” stories. The first story, irrelevant to this particular discussion, was about an eighty-seven-year-old woman who was still capable of walking long distances; the other two stories relate equally surprising tales of individuals with “abnormal” sexualities. The intent of these stories is to entertain the travelers, likely as well to share the more “freakish” side of this small town’s citizenry.

While Montaigne refrains from passing judgment upon the townspeople of Vitry or even upon the cross-dressed Mary and her partners, the social fear in this town is palpable: Mary led a double life that caused another woman to have same-sex relations with her. In this case, the transvestite has revealed a sinister intent—by cross-dressing as the opposite sex, the unwitting same-sex partner will also participate in sodomy. It does not appear that Mary’s wife was punished in any manner, although it would not have been uncommon, as is evidenced in the account told by Jacques Duval of Marie/Marin and his wife Jean.<sup>17</sup> Mary’s wife, however,

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<sup>16</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Referenced in Chapter One. From Greenblatt’s “Fiction and Friction” in *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 73-4. Anthony Fletcher, in *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England*, argues that with the seemingly indecisive manner in which the court handled the Marie/Marin case (offering leniency from burning alive to strangling to being permitted after a few years to wear the clothing of a man and be treated as one), “[t]he court seems to have washed its hands about what should happen thereafter. Marie’s case provides fascinating evidence about the clash of legal and medical discourses, of the demands of society and respect for empirical evidence, in this fraught area. The clash produced virtual inertia. Marie had cheated the system but she got away with it” (84). Katherine Park might rebut, in the case of Marie/Marin’s medical examiner, “not only did [Duval] accept the existence of a spectrum of people whose temperament and conformation—each unique—made them genuinely intermediate between male and female; he celebrated that diversity as a manifestation of natural variety and divine creativity. [...] Whereas the ancients might have tried to destroy her/him, Duval argued, we should keep her/him just as she/he was born” (182). It seems cases such as these were tried using local physicians; it was not simply that Marie/Marin “got away with it,” as



would have been a victim of her spouse's disguise. Using a sexual aid, such as a dildo, to supplement a physical lack participates in the disguise; Mary stands in as an example of the sinful transvestite who leads others to sin through their willing innocence.<sup>18</sup> This transvestite, so goes the social anxiety of sixteenth-century France (and very likely England as well), purposefully crafted a disguise in order to trap other innocent women into a sinful lifestyle that is unnatural and abhorrent to God.<sup>19</sup> For, according to Thomas Paynell's 1555 English translation of Lodovicus Vives' *The Office and Duetie of an Husband*, there is only one true purpose to marriage; he plainly states, "The ende of matrimonye is to haue chyldren, and to lyue together, and manye do erre mooste flagitiouslye in bothe."<sup>20</sup> As Vives himself says, any couple who does not live with this aim in mind lives like criminals. Montaigne, however, does not seem to hold this same anxiety or condemnation; rather than condemn this couple, or even Mary individually, Montaigne takes care to point out that Mary's wife was sexually satisfied.<sup>21</sup> While deliberately mentioning this detail and failing to mention if Mary's wife felt tricked, betrayed, or horrified, readers are made to face head-on the following question: if Mary really behaved as a sinister

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Fletcher says. Instead, Marie/Marin was fortunate enough that Jacques Duval provided the necessary expert testimony to save her/his life.

<sup>18</sup> Ed Cohen points out in "Legislating the Norm" that sodomy or later "buggery" was criminalized under Henry VIII's Parliament in 1533. He explains, "[s]ince sodomy, like heresy, constituted a transgression against the word/law of God, its punishment provided an occasion to reaffirm religious 'truth' and thereby to reiterate the material human relations which that 'truth' organized. In this context, 'sodomy' did not refer exclusively or even primarily to sexual relations between members of the same sex, but indicated a spectrum of nonprocreative sexual practices ranging from use of a dildo or birth control to anal intercourse (between men, or between men and women) and bestiality" (173). The criminalization of this understanding of sodomy "...transformed the broader implications of the religious offense into a specific legal injunction against a set of nonprocreative sexual practices. [...] ...the criminalization of sodomy would seem to have effectively transferred the power to define and punish 'unnatural' sexual practices to the state and conversely to have made the state—in this case coextensive with a king who sought to abrogate his wedding vows—the sole source for establishing the range of acceptable, legitimate, or 'true' relationships. In particular, by claiming for the sovereign the right to punish and execute those convicted for the 'vice of buggery,' Parliament (here acting at the king's behest) not only claimed the right to define the legal culpability for 'sinful' sexual practice but also negated the pope's authority over the bodies and the property—if not the souls—of the king's subjects" (173-4).

<sup>19</sup> According to Fletcher, "[s]he [Mary of Chaumont] was seen as having cheated the system, claiming a gender to which she was not entitled. In fact, we may suspect, it was the dildo that mattered" (84).

<sup>20</sup> Vives, sig. E[viii]r.

<sup>21</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6.

transvestite determined to trap an unwitting heterosexual woman into committing a sin against God, should we not expect to read some sort of reaction from Mary's spouse when her identity was revealed? Perhaps Mary's first fiancée discovered that her lover was another woman, which might have led to their quarrel and the dissolution of their "compact."<sup>22</sup> Because Montaigne is never given a clear explanation for the termination of that relationship, readers are left now to speculate.

Throughout the recounting of Mary's story, Montaigne shifts from using the feminine personal pronoun to the masculine with seeming nonchalance.<sup>23</sup> Upon further inspection, however, one can easily identify the areas where Montaigne purposefully chooses to refer to Mary in the feminine or in the masculine. In fact, the choice in gendered pronouns seems to result from the association a particular person within the story itself has with Mary. For instance, when Montaigne recounts Mary's history in Chaumont-en-Bassigni and with the neighbor who recognizes her and ultimately destroys Mary's disguise, Montaigne uses the feminine pronoun: "...under the name Mary, earning *her* living as a weaver, a well-disposed young man who made friends with everybody."<sup>24</sup> Despite the fact that in this sentence Mary's gender identity shifts from the feminine to the masculine (and despite the fact that Montaigne never reveals Mary's male name, if she even changed it in the first place), Montaigne refers to her with the feminine

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<sup>22</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6. The unfortunate reality in Mary's case is that regardless if her wife felt deceived in some way or not, Mary broke the law by using a sexual aid in order to satisfy her wife in the first place. (See Cohen, p. 173.)

<sup>23</sup> See Laqueur's similar discussion of Montaigne's personal pronoun choice in *Making Sex*, 139. He argues that "[a]s long as sign and status lined up, all was well. Or, conversely, gender as a social category was made to correspond to the sign of sex without reference to personhood. The authorities assumed that the transformation from one to another state was absolutely precipitous, like moving from being married to unmarried. Subjects were assumed to change from being socially defined girls to being socially defined boys with no difficulty or inner turmoil. Indeed, if instantaneous conversion was not forthcoming, the full penalties of the law were" (138-9). It is inconclusive whether or not Montaigne's choice of gendered pronouns was in accordance with rules in early modern grammar handbooks.

<sup>24</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 5-6. Emphasis mine. This English translation by David Frame follows the French closely; Montaigne himself likewise differentiates Mary's time spent dressed as a woman and as a man with the corresponding feminine or masculine pronoun.

pronoun. Later in the story, Montaigne similarly reverts Mary's gender to the feminine when he recounts how Mary's disguise was discovered: "But *she* was recognized by someone from...Chaumont,...and *she* was condemned to be hanged, which *she* said *she* would rather undergo than return to a girl's status; and *she* was hanged for using illicit devices to supply *her* defect in sex."<sup>25</sup> Here, Mary's neighbor revealed her disguise as well as her "natural" sex; Montaigne reverts to the feminine because it is the one that she had left behind in Chaumont. When discussing Mary's gender identity in Vitry, Montaigne only refers to Mary in the masculine: "At...Vitry *he*.... Later *he* went to...Montier-en-Der...and fell in love with a woman, whom *he* married and with whom *he* lived...."<sup>26</sup> Montaigne's ease of use between the two pronouns demonstrates his noncondemnatory nature, as well as his skepticism toward the attitude that pamphleteers like Philip Stubbes held that suggested one's physical sex and wardrobe choice were necessarily bound to one another.

In *Anatomie of Abuses*, Stubbes suggests that women who wear men's clothing equate themselves to hermaphrodites, demonstrating that physical sex is as interchangeable as clothing:

It is written in the 22. of Deuteronomy, that what man so ever weareth woman's apparel is accursed, and what woman weareth man's apparel, is accursed also. Now whether they be within the limits and bands of that curse, let them take heed. Our apparel was given us a sign distinctive, to discern betwixt sex and sex, and therefore one to wear the apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the verity of his own kind. Wherefore these women may not improperly be called Hermaphroditi, that is, Monsters of both kinds, half women,

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<sup>25</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6. Emphasis mine.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

half men. Who if they were natural women, and honest matrons, would blush to go in such wanton and lewd attire, as is proper only to man.<sup>27</sup>

Stubbes criticizes women who would change their sex as easily as they change their wardrobe, reducing them to “monsters” and implying that they are unnatural women because they do not show shame at their seemingly immodest apparel. Fortunately for physical hermaphrodites<sup>28</sup> in the sixteenth century, not all thinkers agreed with men like Stubbes. Although Montaigne’s pronoun choice might be described as “interchangeable,” it is worth noting that he still refers to Mary with the feminine pronouns “she” and “her,” even after Mary has refused to return to wearing the clothing of a woman; dressed as a man, Mary is still a woman, according to Montaigne’s word choice. Mary did not naturally generate a penis because she dressed as a man and likely identified herself with the masculine gender; if she had done, then perhaps it would have been impossible for her to have been hanged. Effortlessly and entirely unintentionally, Montaigne criticizes and rejects any social fears for Mary’s physical transformation into a physical male; Mary was a physical female who identified with the masculine gender and preferred to have sex with women. Unfortunately for Mary and her spouse, she was hanged because she employed the use of a dildo in order to satisfy her partner’s sexual needs.

In the second of the two stories told by the townspeople of Vitry, Montaigne specifically recounts the fear that one’s physical sex is not necessarily static:

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<sup>27</sup> Stubbes, 38.

<sup>28</sup> This is to say, hermaphrodites born with both male and female reproductive organs and/or genitalia. According to Stubbes, some forms of hermaphroditism are acquired through the practice of cross-dressing. Paré does not see hermaphrodites exactly on the same terms as Stubbes. Instead, he identifies four types of hermaphrodites: 1. the male hermaphrodite, 2. the female hermaphrodite, 3. the hermaphrodite who is neither male nor female, and 4. the hermaphrodite who is equally both. The male and female hermaphrodites have the appearance of having both genitalia, but one set is entirely nonfunctioning. The third classification of hermaphrodite has two sets of nonfunctioning genitalia and therefore is incapable of reproducing. The fourth classification, however, has both sets of genitalia that are fully formed and functioning. This last group is required to choose which sex they will be identified as, and are thereafter forbidden from changing their minds (26-7).

The other story is of a man still alive named Germain, of low condition, without any trade or position, who was a girl up to the age of twenty-two, seen and known by all the inhabitants of the town, and noticed because she had a little more hair about her chin than the other girls; and they called her Bearded Mary. One day when she made an effort in jumping, her virile instruments came out, and Cardinal de Lenoncourt, then bishop of Châlons, gave her the name Germain. Germain has not married, however; he has a big, very thick beard. We were not able to see him because he was in the village. In this town there is still a song commonly in the girls' mouths, in which they warn one another not to stretch their legs too wide for fear of becoming males, like Marie Germain.<sup>29</sup>

The impoverished Germain unwittingly stands in as an example of the social (or even the primarily hegemonic, normative masculine) fear that one's physical sex could change with no warning whatsoever; Germain could have been a hermaphrodite (although there is no mention of whether or not Germain experienced a menstrual cycle while being raised female) or a male suffering from cryptorchidism. Germain's case is certainly abnormal, but somehow also stands as a warning to girls that they are solely responsible for maintaining their femininity. Not only should girls keep their legs closed in order to protect their chastity, but now they are warned not to open their legs too wide in the first place for fear that their "virile instruments" might likewise descend. The origins of this song are unknown; however, Montaigne points out that the girls

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<sup>29</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6. In the original French, Montaigne recounts the story thus: "L'autre histoire, c'est d'un homme encore vivant nommé Germain, de basse condition, sans nul mestier ni office, qui a este fille jusques en l'aage de vingt deux ans, et remarquée d'autant qu'elle avoit un peu plus de poil autour du menton que les autres filles; et l'appeloit-on Marie la barbue. Un jour faisant un effort à un sault, ses outils virils se produisierent, et le cardinal de Lenoncourt, évesque pour lors de Chalons, lui donna nom Germain. Il ne s'est pas marié pourtant; il a une grand'barbe fort espaisse. Nous ne le sceumes voir, parce qu'il estoit au vilage. Il y a encore en ceste ville une chanson ordinaire en la bouche des filles, où elles s'entr'advertissent de ne faire plus de grandes enjambées, de peur de devenir masles, comme Marie Germain" (Montaigne *Ouevres Complètes* 1118-1119).

themselves sing the song to one another as a warning not to allow oneself to cross gendered boundaries. The song presents a troubling conundrum: are the girls warning one another to stay within her prescribed place, or could the song be an instrument of the patriarchy in order to dissuade females from pushing against those prescriptive gender boundaries? Is it possible to do both? It is possible that these girls were so firmly grounded within patriarchal propaganda that they *believed* that they believed the song's warning: what girl *would* want to lose her femininity to maleness? Pamphleteers like Vives, Stubbes, and Ascham (who are further explored in greater detail) would provide arguments for why girls should be restricted to their subservient roles within the patriarchy. Vives even reasons: "...yf the woman were robust and strong, both of mind & body, howe could she suffre to be obediente and suiect to him, that were no stronger then her selfe?"<sup>30</sup> If Vives' opinion, translated into English in 1555, represents in any small way the opinion of the patriarchy, he reveals a general anxiety in regards to the resultant power shift when women realize they are as capable as the dominant men in their lives. The song may serve no other purpose besides to reiterate girls' submissive place in the patriarchy and to instill a general anxiety that they could somehow themselves be held accountable for any change to their sex (and therefore to their social role).

This fear immediately recalls Galen's concept of male and female reproductive anatomy: women are merely the inversions of men. While men's reproductive organs are visible externally, those of women are more mysterious and are "invisibly" internal. Thomas Laqueur explains that using this theory of anatomical characterization, "...a man could be squeezed out of a woman."<sup>31</sup> In his *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, Galen clarifies his point that women are the anatomical inversions of men: "Think too, please, of...the uterus turned outward

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<sup>30</sup> Vives. *The Office and Duetie of an Husband*. Trans. Thomas Paynell. sig. [E vi]r-[Evi]v.

<sup>31</sup> Laqueur, 26.

and projecting. Would not the testes [ovaries] then necessarily be inside it? Would it not contain them like a scrotum? Would not the neck [the cervix], hitherto concealed inside the perineum but now pendent, be made into the male member?"<sup>32</sup> According to Galen's theory, women's reproductive organs are not just *mirrors* of men's reproductive organs; they *are* men's reproductive organs, except they are shifted and misplaced throughout the body. "Women, in other words, are inverted, and hence less perfect, men," Laqueur argues. "They have exactly the same organs but in exactly the wrong places. (The wrongness of women, of course, does not follow logically from the 'fact' that their organs are the same as men's, differing only in placement. The arrow of perfection *could* go either or both ways.)"<sup>33</sup> It is precisely this image of misplaced male reproductive sex organs within the weak body of the female that creates such great anxiety in the little town of Vitry-le-François. Marie Germain's neighbors sing the song of "Bearded Mary" not only to humiliate Germain but also to warn the girls that their bodies could equally rebel against them one day.

The pressure put upon the female, then, is to retain femininity. Germain's female neighbors are instructed to keep from spreading their legs too wide, as "Bearded Mary" herself might have done when she "made an effort in jumping."<sup>34</sup> Implied in this cautionary ditty is that women's organs are more fluid than men's; they naturally move about the body, and they are inclined to return to their original location outside of the body. In this way, women are reduced to freakish versions of men, not simply inversions. They are physical "anomalies" (no matter how many "anomalies" there are in the world with the same reproductive function); they are monsters wandering about with a mistake for an anatomy. Montaigne does not appear to

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<sup>32</sup> Galen, translated by Kathleen Long, 629.

<sup>33</sup> Laqueur, 26.

<sup>34</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6.

participate within the culture of judgment or horror when he recounts the story related to him by “the most eminent officials of the town.”<sup>35</sup> The story is retold as fact: one day, a woman jumped into the air (presumably over something and with legs spread wide) and landed as a man. Once again, Montaigne changes his gender pronouns without any hesitation. When he writes of Mary, he refers to her in the feminine: “...*she* had a little more hair about *her* chin than the other girls; and they called *her* Bearded Mary. One day when *she* made an effort in jumping, *her* virile instruments came out...gave *her* the name Germain.”<sup>36</sup> Montaigne makes an interesting word choice when describing the possession of the “virile instruments”—preceding this phrase is the feminine possessive pronoun, suggesting that Montaigne could believe that Mary’s *female* sex organs descended from her body. He passes no condemnation either way, merely relating that later the town’s bishop changed the girl’s name to Germain for she appeared now to be more male than female. From this point forward, Montaigne refers to Germain with the masculine pronouns and notes that Germain has not yet married.

Montaigne does tell the story of Marie Germain in his *Essays*, and it is there his judgment is more obvious.<sup>37</sup> In the essay, “Of the power of the imagination” (1:21), Montaigne writes:

Passing through Vitry-le-François, I might have seen a man whom the bishop of Soissons had named Germain at confirmation, but whom all the inhabitants of that place had seen and known as a girl named Marie until the age of twenty-two. He was now heavily bearded, and old, and not married. Straining himself in some way in jumping, he says, his masculine organs came forth; and among the girls there a song is still current by which they warn each other not to take big strides

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<sup>35</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> According to Laqueur, this story was not part of the A text of *Essays* and was later added by Montaigne, which could account for the confusion of dates (listed as between 1572-4 in the *Essays*, while Montaigne learned about the event in September 1580).



for fear of becoming boys, like Marie Germain. It is not so great a marvel that this sort of accident is frequently met with. For if the imagination has the power in such things, it is so continually and vigorously fixed on this subject that in order not to have to relapse so often into the same thought and sharpness of desire, it is better off if once and for all it incorporates this masculine member in girls.<sup>38</sup>

In this retelling of Germain's story, Montaigne chooses the masculine pronouns from the outset, suggesting that it was only the townspeople who had known Germain as a woman. Even when referring to the organs that descended, Montaigne uses the masculine possessive pronoun in place of the feminine possessive pronoun. The judgment Montaigne passes on this story is not upon the man who was raised a girl; instead, Montaigne judges the *imagination* at work that caused the townspeople to believe that all girls must possess a masculine member within them: "...if the imagination has the power in such things...it is better off if once and for all it incorporates this masculine member in girls."<sup>39</sup> Montaigne's point here is that the phenomenon Germain experienced so confused and perplexed his neighbors that they were continually attempting to understand precisely what happened. Perhaps under the influence of Galenic medical thought, Vitry's collective imagination settled upon the conclusion that Germain, while still Marie, always possessed the masculine organs (which is likely true) because girls are mere inversions of boys (which is decidedly false). There are no other satisfactory explanations offered in Montaigne's essay, but he does acknowledge that the people of Vitry were immediately concerned with attempting to reach what they believed was a logical conclusion. Perhaps Montaigne feels sympathetic with the townspeople of Vitry: he begins his essay on

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<sup>38</sup> Montaigne, "Of the power of the imagination," *Essays*, 69.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

imagination admitting, “I am one of those who are very much influenced by the imagination.”<sup>40</sup>

He argues that the imagination is not only powerful enough to change the minds of those who are easily influenced by it, but that perhaps it is the power of the imagination itself that causes tangible change in our bodies.

Did Germain *wish* to be turned into a man? Was he tired of the ridicule he suffered under the moniker “Bearded Mary”? If he did wish to be made into a man, someone on whom facial hair is natural and expected, could this wish have actually caused a physical metamorphosis in Germain that *caused* his (or her?) masculine member to issue forth from the body? Montaigne does not answer these questions; instead, he leaves his reader to reach a conclusion alone. He does remind his reader that “[it] is not so great a marvel that this sort of accident is frequently met with,” which recalls the previous examples Montaigne employs to demonstrate the power of the imagination over a physical body.<sup>41</sup> (For instance, the ability for one to become ill by apparently *willing* it, to say nothing of exposure to the illness.) If Montaigne is suggesting that Germain managed to *will* himself to appear in all ways male, then the imagination employed here is not a collective one; indeed, only Germain would have had the sole power to create masculinity where there was previously femininity.

It seems that Montaigne actually has a great deal of concern for the belief that all girls are equipped with an inverted masculine member. It does not appear that he is speaking particularly of Germain’s case or even Germain’s sole imagination; instead, I interpret Montaigne’s final thought on the Marie-Germain story as a meditation on the power of the collective imagination. Through the power of suggestion in Virty-le-François, the townspeople were able to eventually agree upon a satisfactory answer by way of their collective imaginations: all girls (evidenced by

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<sup>40</sup> Montaigne, “Of the power of the imagination,” *Essays*, 68.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

Montaigne's use of the plural *girls* instead of the singular) must have a masculine member. Galen is right, and Germain serves as a cautionary tale—keep your legs close together, girls, or else you too could become a boy. According to Laqueur, however, the song's cautionary approach can lead scholars to incorrect conclusions: "Real sex changes are, in other words, not the object correlatives of imagined ones. [...] The problem is rather that in the imaginative world...there is no 'real' sex that in principle grounds and distinguishes in a reductionist fashion two genders. Gender is part of the order of things, and sex, if not entirely conventional, is not solidly corporeal either."<sup>42</sup> In the case of hermaphrodites or those, like Germain (we might suppose) who suffered from another condition which prevents the male organs from descending externally, the *appearance* of sex does not tell the full story of sexual or gender identity.<sup>43</sup> These are individuals whose sexes cannot be trusted—they are ever-changing and may allude to a fluctuation in physical sex among the rest of humanity as well. "...[F]or hermaphrodites the question was not 'what sex they are *really*,'" argues Laqueur, "but to which gender the architecture of their bodies most readily lent itself. The concern of magistrates was less with corporeal reality—with what we would call sex—than with maintaining clear social boundaries, maintaining the categories of gender."<sup>44</sup> Germain is permitted to continue his life as a male

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<sup>42</sup> Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 128.

<sup>43</sup> In "Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys, and Tarts," Barbara Creed argues that, "...Marie was always a boy but one suffering from a hormone deficiency which meant 'her' external sexual organs did not develop until puberty. This fanciful tale only makes sense in a one-sex world" (90). She goes on further to argue that Germain's story suggests a cultural concept of the dangers of female desire. "Given the conceptualization of woman's body as a thwarted male body and the clitoris and labia as penis and foreskin, it is no wonder that desire was also thought of as masculine. Along this continuum of desire, where male desire is hot and female cold, where the sexes are in danger of changing from one to the other, lesbian desire, the active desire of one woman for another, was seen as aggressive and virile. In this context, the body of the desiring woman, heated by active passion, no doubt threatens to become male like that of Marie/Germain. The active female body disturbs cultural definitions of gender and collapses the inside/outside boundary that constitutes the social division into female and male" (91). Although Creed is not suggesting that Germain was at any time a lesbian woman, what she does argue is that there was room in this sixteenth-century French social concept of male and female sexualities for the possibility of excess female sexual desire to lead to *masculinity*.

<sup>44</sup> Laqueur, 135.

rather than as a female because his body *recommends* that decision, not because it is more or less socially convenient for Germain to wear breeches rather than gowns.

The fact that Germain has aged and remained unmarried perpetuates the cautionary nature of his story: what woman would want to marry a man who was once a girl? Or, if we should believe the lyrics to the neighborhood girls' song, perhaps the condition is even contagious!<sup>45</sup> Montaigne reveals no clues as to Germain's perpetual bachelorhood—it is no more clear that Germain was attracted to men (having been raised to believe that he was actually female, which might suggest that one's sexuality is a product of social conditioning) or that Germain was attracted to women (which, if heterosexuality is the natural norm, would be the appropriate pairing since Germain was always a man). In all ways, Germain's story leaves us perplexed: in what ways did Germain's physical sex create his gender identity and, to go further into the speculative, a sexual identity? Unfortunately, the answers to this question will remain forever unknown; Montaigne simply does not provide for us any additional information.

Although Montaigne, in his generally non-judgmental observant manner, does not offer additional details to readers of his *Journal* or *Essays* in regards to the story of Germain, Ambroise Paré does. In the seventh chapter of *On Monsters and Marvels* titled “Memorable stories about women who have degenerated into men,” Paré shares three accounts in Renaissance Europe of adolescent girls who develop male genitalia, one of which is the story of Marie/Germain from Vitry:

Also being in the retinue of the King at Vitry-le-François in Champagne, I saw a certain person (a shepherd) named Germain Garnier—some called him Germain Marie, because when he had been a girl he had been called Marie—a young man

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<sup>45</sup> Montaigne, *Travel Journal*, 6.

of average size, stocky, and very well put together, wearing a red, rather thick beard, who, until he was fifteen years of age, had been held to be a girl, given the fact that no mark of masculinity was visible in him, and furthermore that along with the girls he even dressed like a woman. Now having attained the aforesaid age, as he was in the fields and was rather robustly chasing his swine, which were going into a wheat field, [and] finding a ditch, he wanted to cross over it, and having leaped, at that very moment the genitalia and the male rod came to be developed in him, having ruptured the ligaments by which previously they had been held enclosed and locked in (which did not happen to him without pain), and, weeping, he returned from the spot to his mother's house, saying that his guts had fallen out of his belly; and his mother was very astonished at this spectacle. And having brought together Physicians and Surgeons in order to get an opinion on this, they found that she was a man, and no longer a girl; and presently, after having reported to the Bishop—who was the now defunct Cardinal of Lenoncourt—and by his authority, an assembly having been called, the shepherd received a man's name: and instead of Marie (for so was he previously named), he was called Germain, and men's clothing was given to him; and I believe that he and his mother are still living.<sup>46</sup>

While Montaigne's account of Germain's experience fails to mention the pain Germain must have suffered during his "transformation," Paré is not shy and feels the details are important—as a chief barber-surgeon should. Perhaps through describing the agony Germain must have suffered as the ligaments ruptured and released his male sex organs, Paré educates his readers of

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<sup>46</sup> Paré, 31-2.

the phenomenon itself: Germain always possessed the male sex organs, but they were incapable of descending properly until Germain reached the age of fifteen.<sup>47</sup> Contradictory to this logic, however, is Galen's teaching that the anatomy of women's sex organs is inversely mirrored to that of men's sex organs. If Germain always had male organs within him, then the assumption is that the female organs had managed to "fall out" of the body. Paré, educated on Galen's teachings of anatomy, has an explanation that seeks to negotiate this seeming logical puzzle:

The reason why women can degenerate into men is because women have as much hidden within the body as men have exposed outside; leaving aside, only, that women don't have so much heat, nor the ability to push out what by the coldness of their temperament is held as if bound to the interior. Wherefore if with time, the humidity of childhood which prevented the warmth from doing its full duty being exhaled for the most part, the warmth is rendered more robust, vehement, and active, then it is not an unbelievable thing if the latter, chiefly aided by some violent movement, should be able to push out what was hidden within. Now since such a metamorphosis takes place in Nature for the alleged reasons and examples, we therefore never find in any true story that any man ever became a woman, because Nature tends always toward what is most perfect and not, on the contrary, to perform in such a way that what is perfect should become imperfect.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> We should notice that Montaigne and Paré differ on Germain's age when the incident occurred. According to Montaigne, Germain reached the age of twenty-two before transforming into a man, while in Paré account, Germain was still an adolescent. In fact, if Germain did suffer from an undiagnosed case of cryptorchidism, it is much more likely that the incident occurred during adolescence rather than young adulthood. Likewise, it is plausible that Germain would not have had a menstrual cycle by the age of fifteen; although late, certainly by sixteenth century standards, it is more logical to imagine the lack of shock on the part of Germain's mother when her "daughter" had not yet started her period by the age of fifteen rather than as late as twenty-two.

<sup>48</sup> Paré, 32-3.

With this explanation in mind, we would be mistaken if we assume that sixteenth-century philosophers, doctors, and surgeons believed there to be two separate sets of sex organs; rather, Paré's clarification on the very *cause* of this transformation in women suggests the belief that there is a *single* set of true sex organs. The difference between the male and female is not whether or not they possess genitalia of similar appearance; instead, men and women are different based entirely on whether or not their sex organs are easily visible on the exterior of the body or if they are mysteriously hidden within the interior.

Germain always had male sex organs and never possessed a uterus and ovaries (his omission from Paré's chapter on hermaphrodites, coupled with the lack of a report on Germain's menstrual cycle from either Paré or Montaigne, suggests that Germain did not possess *both* sets of sex organs). Germain was always male and suffered from a physical condition that prevented his male sex organs from fully developing outside of the body previous to adolescence. To the sixteenth-century thinker, however, cases like Germain's were evidence that indeed males and females possessed the exterior or interior versions of the very same reproductive sex organs, the primary function of which was to complement one another in conception. According to Paré's conclusions on this particular marvel, the solitary reproductive sex organs always tend toward the natural and perfect: the exterior (therefore, the male). Because in this patriarchal system the female was considered the weaker and imperfect being, cases such as Germain's necessarily served as evidence to prove the assertion that perfect Nature preferred the masculine. Germain's imperfect female body must have recognized its flawed nature and sought to revert to the masculine in order to achieve natural perfection.

Paré relies a great deal on Christian motifs of sinfulness to explain his basis of comparing the phenomena that his book comprises. Throughout the text, it becomes abundantly clear that,

to Paré, the natural is perfect and of God—although the case may appear to be abhorrent to man, Paré asserts that God has a plan and a reason for the phenomenon. He argues that, “[it] is certain that most often these monstrous and marvelous creatures proceed from the judgment of God, who permits fathers and mothers to produce such abominations from the disorder that they make in copulation, like brutish beasts, in which their appetite guides them, without respecting the time, or other laws ordained by God and Nature....”<sup>49</sup> While a monster may appear to be an example of that which is against God and Nature, paradoxically Paré believes the monstrous and marvelous to be *ordained* by God as either an opportunity or a punishment to the parents. In some cases, a child may be born with a particular defect so the parents can witness the glory of God all the more obviously, such as the case related in the Gospel of John: “...about a man who was born blind, who having recovered his sight, through the grace of Jesus Christ,” was so caused to be blind and likewise healed “...in order that the works of God might be magnified in him.”<sup>50</sup> In this case, Paré relies upon the Biblical story of Christ’s healing the blind man to demonstrate to his own readers that God does not only wish to punish but to also show his glory by his ability to heal them. In other cases, God’s wrath falls upon the parents of a monster, whose birth is both a punishment to the parents and also a warning to others about unnatural sex practices (Paré demonstrates particular disgust in regards to intercourse during a woman’s menstrual cycle): “...such marvels often come from the pure will of God, to warn us of the misfortunes with which we are threatened, of some great disorder, and also that the ordinary course of Nature seemed to be twisted in [producing] such unfortunate offspring.”<sup>51</sup> Spouses who choose to have sexual intercourse (which is natural) during the wife’s menstrual cycle

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<sup>49</sup> Paré, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 6.



(which is unnatural) must face the consequences that their offspring could very well bear the sign of their perverse natural coupling.<sup>52</sup>

The difference between monsters and marvels, according to Paré's definition, is based entirely on whether the phenomenon occurs outside the course of nature or against it: "Monsters are things that appear *outside* the course of Nature (and are usually signs of some forthcoming misfortune), such as a child who is born with one arm, another who will have two heads, and additional members over and above the ordinary;" while "[marvels] are things which happen that are completely against Nature as when a woman will give birth to a serpent, or to a dog, or some other thing that is totally against Nature...."<sup>53</sup> Although one might assume Paré would qualify cases of hermaphrodites within the category of the monstrous, he instead suggests that they are "maimed," and those maimed persons, through the course of their defect, exist *against* Nature.<sup>54</sup> Montaigne disagrees with Paré's definition of monsters and argues that:

What we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of his work the infinity of forms that he has comprised in it; and it is for us to believe that this figure that astonishes us is related and linked to some other figure of the same kind unknown to man. From his infinite wisdom there proceeds nothing but that

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<sup>52</sup> This concept is not strictly Christian, nor does it have its roots in Christianity. Foucault looks to Soranus of Ephesus's *Gynecology* to explain that the ancient Greeks likewise believed that the female body had an "appropriate" (different from "ideal") time to conceive: "The uterus is avid; it consumes, it loads itself with nutriment, sometimes with blood (the normal case), sometimes with seed (and fertilization occurs). To be procreative, the sexual act must take place at a favorable time in this alimentary rhythm. [...] Not during menstrual evacuation, which constitutes a kind of natural vomiting, when the semen runs the risk of being swept out as well. Nor when the flow has completely stopped: the uterus, deicated and chilled, is then no longer in a condition to receive the seed. [...] But there is more still. For conception to occur in suitable conditions and for the offspring to have every possible quality, the sexual act itself must be performed with the observance of certain precautions. Soranus says nothing precise on this subject. He simply indicates the necessity of a prudent and calm behavior, one that avoids all the disturbances, all the intoxications that might be reflected in the embryo, since the latter would be a kind of mirror and witness of these excesses" (126-7, vol. 3, *The History of Sexuality*). The excess of the mother naturally feeds the embryo who would then bare those excesses and develop weaknesses or even cravings. A child born out of the proper "season" might well reveal to the world the parents' poor decision to copulate during an inappropriate time.

<sup>53</sup> Paré, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

is good and ordinary and regular; but we do not see its arrangement and relationship. *What he sees often, he does not wonder at, even if he does not know why it is. If something happens which he has not seen before, he thinks it is a prodigy* [Cicero]. We call contrary to nature what happens contrary to custom; nothing is anything but according to nature, whatever it may be. Let this universal and natural reason drive out of us the error and astonishment that novelty brings us.<sup>55</sup>

According to Montaigne's reasoning, that which *man* would call monstrous is merely a judgment based on the *uncommon*; he argues that God would not create monsters that are truly monstrous opposite of divine intent. Although Paré fails to qualify Germain's case (or the others like it) as either monstrous or marvelous (which he does specify for other cases throughout the course of his book), we could logically conclude that Paré would have characterized these instances of "women degenerating into men" as the marvelous returning to its perfect, natural state. It appears as though monsters are incapable of healing or reverting to something that might be considered to exist *within* Nature—once *outside* of Nature, there is nothing to be done to return to the natural. That which is *against* Nature, however, might stand a chance to be redeemed and realigned with Nature, as the case of the hermaphrodites in Paré's estimation might reveal to us.

In his sixth chapter "On hermaphrodites or androgynes, that is to say, which have two sets of sex organs in one body," Paré examines the cause and specific incidents of hermaphroditism, explaining in great detail how one might conclude that an individual hermaphrodite is primarily male or female. This conclusion, although seemingly irrelevant and arbitrary, actually participates in the ongoing dialogue between gender identification in terms of

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<sup>55</sup> Montaigne, "Of a monstrous child," *Essays*, 539. Original emphasis.

social conformity, specifically in regards to clothing choices. Paré explains that in the case of hermaphrodites who possess fully formed and functioning male and female genitalia,

...both the ancient and modern laws have obliged and still oblige [them] to choose which sex organs they wish to use, and they are forbidden on pain of death to use any but those they will have chosen, on account of the misfortunes that could result from such. For some of them have abused their situation, with the result that, through mutual and reciprocal use, they take their pleasure first with one set of sex organs and then with the other: first with those of a man, then with those of a woman, because they have the *natures* of man and of woman suitable to such an act....<sup>56</sup>

The choice these hermaphrodites face, then, is whether or not to be treated as fully male or fully female; while non-hermaphrodites are not given the opportunity to make such a choice, these monstrous marvels must decide to be seen as either a man or a woman by their society.<sup>57</sup>

Germain himself, although not classified as a hermaphrodite, was also given the opportunity to make an outward claim to masculinity: he was given male attire. Upon receiving the attire of one sex or another, the hermaphrodite is forbidden from cross-dressing or participating in sexual intercourse with the opposite-sex genitalia. Paré seems to believe that there is a natural inclination to the “correct” gender, which can be administered by a thorough examination from a

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<sup>56</sup> Paré, 26-7.

<sup>57</sup> Referring to the story of David (raised Brenda), Butler examines an interview in which David reveals his interpretation of his gender. She points out that, “[t]he act of self-reporting and the act of self-observation takes place in relation to a certain audience, with a certain audience as the imagined recipient, before a certain audience for whom a verbal and visual picture of selfhood is being produced” (*Undoing Gender* 67). For David, as well as for the hermaphrodites of Paré’s experience, they must identify themselves in the only language available—undoubtedly a language that relies upon heteronormative vocabulary and stereotypes. The hermaphrodites of Paré’s studies could only use the terminology available to them to explain their desires and the way that they understood themselves. Because the terms are inefficient and insufficient, the spectrum of genders Paré’s hermaphrodites might have acknowledged simply were not able to be expressed.

doctor. He explains that to decide if a hermaphrodite is a woman, then one must observe that the vulva is capable of penetration, that the patient has had a menstrual cycle, that the hair is fine rather than coarse, the voice higher pitched than a man's, that overall the body is effeminate rather than "robust."<sup>58</sup> If these things are true, then the hermaphrodite is free to identify as female. In the case of determining a hermaphrodite to be a man, however, sexual response is quickly thrown into the qualifying characteristics: "...one must examine carefully to see whether the male rod is well-proportioned in thickness and length, and whether it can [become] erect, and whether seed issues from it, [all of] which will be done through the confession of the hermaphrodite, when he will have kept company with a woman..."<sup>59</sup> In this instance, a hermaphrodite can claim maleness when he can confess to having a sexual response to the company of a woman. So much for a hermaphrodite attracted to men—in that case, the hermaphrodite *must* be dressed as a woman. Ultimately, Paré would have hermaphrodites returned to their natural, holy state: as God would have them, they should naturally be predisposed toward opposite sex attractions.

### Clothing Maketh the Man

The stories of hermaphrodites, and those of possible early sufferers of cryptorchidism, present a compelling and worthwhile foundation for the study of cross-dressing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for such stories clearly indicate a social construct of gender and sexual identities. In these stories, gender identity and sexual identity are complementary pieces of an individual's defining sense of Self. If a hermaphrodite is permitted to choose a gender identity (one of only two choices in this time period: masculine or feminine), then that

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<sup>58</sup> Paré, 27-8.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-9.

hermaphrodite is likewise clearly making a case for his or her sexual identity as well. The hermaphrodite whose male and female genitalia work equally well (in the ways Paré defines above) seems to receive a test in regards to sexual attraction. In this case, natural sexual attraction (arousal from a non-hermaphrodite) will dictate gender identification. Paré suggests that the hermaphrodite who can prove an erection at the sight of a woman is someone who will naturally and obviously identify as masculine. This hermaphrodite will be given male clothing and will be permitted to have sex only with his penis rather than by employing the vulva in any fashion. We can only assume, then, that the opposite would be true for the hermaphrodite who does not experience arousal in the company of a woman—naturally, Paré seems to say, women are not attracted to other women. So the hermaphrodite who is not aroused by women will likely identify with the feminine gender and receive female’s clothing, as well as the admonition never to use her functional penis for sexual intercourse. In fact, Valerie Traub points out in *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, “[t]he difference between being judged a hermaphrodite or a tribade...was as crucial as it was uncertain. A further contribution to the confusion was the status of clothing as a signifier of identity. Discourses about hermaphrodites, tribades, female sodomites, and spontaneous transsexuals were also discourses about crossdressing.”<sup>60</sup> Unlike others within the same social structure, the hermaphrodite represents a naturally “unnatural” combination of the sexes which requires some form of rendering into social order. This rendering takes the form of clothing and admonitions to behave appropriately to the gender *assigned* by the legal system, which is much the same admonition (and “opportunity”) afforded other sexual anomalies such as transvestites like Marie/Marin and Mary from Vitry-le-François.

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<sup>60</sup> Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbian in Early Modern England*, 47-8.

Providing the hermaphrodite or the sufferer of cryptorchidism with clothing that indicates a specific sex (either a gown or trousers) suggests that gender expression exists almost solely for the purpose of making obvious one's sexual attractions and preferences. The patriarchy's anxiety toward "natural" human sexual urges and expressions provided ample foundation for the propagation of paranoid pamphleteers like Phillip Stubbes to draw rigid lines around appropriate behavior between the (decidedly *only*) two genders. According to Anthony Fletcher, in *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England*:

While sex was still unstable and indeterminate, it was the more important to ensure that gender provided a respected foundational structure which would make sense of each person's identity and enable society to function without disorder. Out of sexual confusion, friction, the competition of male and female seeds, much was required, much that was necessarily artificial and the subject of social construction. Men were struggling with enforcing patriarchy on the basis of outward gender significations. This meant two things. Firstly that male control had to be seen to rest upon a firm and decisive identification of sexual identity, even where that identification was not actually decisive. Only this could give maleness a sense of privilege and a sense of visible differentiation. Secondly heterosexual mating must remain normative. The structures of patriarchy had to remain in control of expressions of both friendship and of erotic attraction.<sup>61</sup>

According to Fletcher, only the patriarchy was capable of determining appropriate sexual expression, as well as appropriate couplings. If the coupling appeared to threaten normative procreative intent in any way, it would need unflinching, *decisive* legislation to stabilize and

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<sup>61</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800*, 83.

control it. Fletcher carefully points out that the possession of a physical penis does not a *man* make: “Full manhood was unattainable without the process of courtship, marriage, and household formation....”<sup>62</sup> The men who would make legitimate contributions to the patriarchy’s claim to general power and control over gender identity were only those males who could truly call themselves *men*.<sup>63</sup>

The expression of gender, a concept that has always endured fluctuating social definition within which individuals are expected to “find” themselves, was limited according to the boundaries set by powerful men within the early modern English realm. These men stood to lose should other genders, or other expressions of sexuality, attempt to subvert hegemonic ones. Clothing quickly became a deliberate and facile means, not only to legislate, but also to monitor *at all* to what extent one demonstrated his or her effeminacy or masculinity. In fact, according to Stubbes, clothing exists with the distinct purpose to identify a person as male or female so that others may tell who one is (and potentially avoid unintentional sexual attractions). Describing the thinly-veiled metaphor for England, Stubbes’ visitor to Ailgna, Philoporus, expresses disgust at the idea that the women of Ailgna would seek to dress outside of social conventions for their gender in the first place:

The women also there have doublets and jerkins, as men have here, buttoned up the breast, and made with wings, welts, and pinions on the shoulder points, as man’s apparel is, for all the world, and though this be a kind of attire, appropriate only to man, yet they blush not to wear it: and if they could as well change their sex, and put on the kind of man, as they can wear apparel assigned only to man, I

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<sup>62</sup> Fletcher, 97.

<sup>63</sup> Young men were aware that excessiveness was something to be shunned and turned away from as they developed into *men*. Excessiveness of appetite (particularly sexual) might have fallen into the realm of the excessiveness warned against in Stubbes, Ascham, Vives, and Livy. (See also DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, 5.)

think they would as verily become men indeed as now they degenerate from godly sober women, in wearing this wanton lewd kind of attire, proper only to man.<sup>64</sup>

Lisa Jardine points out in *Still Harping on Daughters* that Stubbes' anxiety toward these fashion changes in men's apparel, "...[obliterate] the customary distinction between male and female costume. It was not that the doublet was indecent—it was actually more decorous than a 'feminine' low-cut gown. But it was morally indecent because it announced absence of difference between the sexes...."<sup>65</sup> Because men participated in the blurring of these sociosexual boundaries as well, Stubbes seems to fear the potential for their likewise leading the women astray.<sup>66</sup> Stubbes, through Philoporus, goes further to argue that the women who behave this way are not only socially immoral but are also abominations in the eyes of God, ignoring the teachings in Deuteronomy, and begin to blur the distinctive gender lines to such an appalling degree that they might as well change their physical sex (like hermaphrodites) as well. Somehow for Stubbes, cross-dressing over sociosexual boundaries is akin to crossing over physical sexual boundaries.

Stubbes provides the intersection for this particular line of study: at what point does social cross-dressing relate to sexuality or to physical sex changes at all? Jonathan Dollimore looks to William Perkins' "The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience" (1592) in his *Pioneer Works* in response to the relationship between cross-dressing and social class. According to Perkins: "[dress] must be answerable to our estate and dignitie, for distinction of order and

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<sup>64</sup> Stubbes, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Jardine, 155.

<sup>66</sup> Jardine continues: "In the natural order of things, the order which sumptuary law codifies in order of dress, woman is subject to man. The elimination of dress difference between men and women implies a narrowing of the gap between the man and his subordinate; that is the implied threat which is attacked in pamphlet after pamphlet addressed against fashionable excesses in the early seventeenth century" (156).



degree in the societies of men. This use of attire, stands by the very ordinance of God; who, as he hath not sorted all men to all places, so he will have men to fitte themselves and their attire, to the qualitie of their proper places, to put a difference betweene themselves and others....”<sup>67</sup> It is the responsibility of the patriarchy to dictate who is permitted to wear what in order to create difference between God’s human creations. “Thus the ideology of gender difference was just as fundamental as that of class in securing the social order,” Dollimore explains. “In fact, patriarchy, class, and hierarchy all presupposed a law of gender difference which was at once divinely, naturally, and socially laid down, the law descending from the first through the second to the third.”<sup>68</sup> If Perkins and Stubbes are to be believed, then the answer to the question I pose above seems simple: the link between social cross-dressing and sexuality or physical sex is simply in the *responsibility* of the individual to *represent* him- or herself “accurately” according to patriarchal expectations and guidelines. Because there are members of the early modern society who did not themselves know their true sex (as in the cases explored earlier), there is some room for interpretation of sociosexual boundaries; in order to eliminate the possible interpretations, early modern English citizens must be made painfully aware that the established codes of dress were delegated by God to be interpreted *only* by the ruling class and followed faithfully by the citizenry.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Perkins, 210.

<sup>68</sup> Dollimore, 288-9.

<sup>69</sup> The original purpose of the sumptuary laws seems to have generally aimed at preventing the lower classes from temptation of excess; spending exorbitant amounts of money on appearances not only would lead one to poverty but would also prove one’s sheer pride and vanity. The sumptuary laws as practiced revealed a deep and brightly illuminated differentiation between the social classes, which would naturally encompass the delineation between genders as well (since women and men have separate sumptuary codes they should follow, even within the same classes). Pointing out the extent to which the sumptuary codes and their enforcement demonstrated a cultural anxiety about female homosexuality, Traub suggests that, “[a]lthough English sumptuary legislation regulated status boundaries rather than gender, and it is probably the case that very few women actually crossdressed, the anxiety that crossdressing would become viable fashion was still evident: during the height of the pamphlet controversy about the nature of women in the early years of the seventeenth century, King James of England and Scotland instructed clergymen to preach against women wearing masculine accouterments such as doublets and swords” (*The*

In terms of gender expression, clothing appears to consistently come down as a mandate—even those who identified as the corresponding gender to their physical sex (masculinity for physical males, femininity for physical females) were restricted in the precise manner that they could explore and express that gender.<sup>70</sup> For the early moderns, one was either a man or a woman, wore either trousers or a gown, felt sexual attraction to the opposite sex, and sought procreation through marriage. The instant transvestites or hermaphrodites enter social awareness, their mere presence alone baffles gender constructs and sociosexual roles. For the early moderns, they would have forced some reconsideration of previously accepted beliefs of sexual identity and gender roles based strictly on one's physical make-up. If society cannot rely upon biology in order to construct the patriarchal strata based on gender roles, then what should that structure be based upon? The question itself reveals the early modern anxiety that suggests precisely Laqueur's point:

The body...seemed to be the absolute foundation for the entire system of bipolar gender. But sex is a shaky foundation. Changes in corporeal structures, or the discovery that things were not as they seemed at first, could push a body easily from one juridical category (female) to another (male). [...] Maleness and femaleness did not reside in anything in particular.<sup>71</sup>

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*Renaissance of Lesbian in Early Modern England*, 48). For a more detailed history of the medieval sumptuary codes, see Kim Phillips' "Masculinities and the Medieval English Sumptuary Laws."

<sup>70</sup> This tendency within women to place such great importance upon trinkets and baubles is something Vives respects as an adorable trait in women. Excessiveness in apparel is an *effeminate* trait; should a man exhibit these qualities, he betrays his masculinity and shames himself. According to Vives, a good husband will allow his wife to enjoy her excessiveness (to a point) while also encouraging some limitations upon her natural expression of femininity. Should he attempt (with great futility, Vives might say) to change his wife's nature, the husband might risk causing her to become over *masculine* in her apparel: "[thys] feminine sexe doeth sette muche stoore by goodlye and precyous raymente, the immoderate and unsaciabie desyre thereof maye be brydeled and refrayned, but not cleane taken awaye and disanulled" (sig. [Yiv]v). If the natural course for femininity is toward indulgence, men seeking to uphold heteronormativity should embrace that which characterizes the female.

<sup>71</sup> Laqueur, 135.

Ostensibly, determining one's sex (and therefore one's social position) should be relatively simple,<sup>72</sup> individuals whose external organs did not fall distinctly within one of the two categories for physical sex were the source of social panic. Requiring the arousal tests described by Paré, singing the song observed by Montaigne, or echoing Vives' sincere bewilderment toward husbands who seek to treat their wives equally, all smack of social paranoia and anxiety regarding unbridled, unrestrained, uncontrolled, chaotic human nature. Society has always sought to legislate these moments of disorder so that social "values" (put in place by heteronormative hegemonic discourses) might maintain power of domination over insubordinate social inferiors. Should the subordinates feel they have a stake in the claim to power, the patriarchy stands to crumble upon its foundations.

Because effeminacy has historically been seen as an expression of weakness (especially when demonstrated by males), and because masculinity has historically been equated with strength and rigor (except when demonstrated by females), the "wearing" of these genders in cross-dressed garb leads to complex questions. Following Dollimore's lead, I examine these questions in terms of theatrical crossing: social anxiety surrounding theatrical playing *at all* would have indicated early modern English presumptions of appropriate expressions of social order. According to Dollimore:

...the theatre,...like the transvestite, was seen both to epitomize and to promote contemporary forces of disruption in and through its involvement with cross-dressing. [...] ...social stability depended crucially on people staying just as they were (identity), where they were (location), and doing what they always had done (calling). When the rogue meets the player two lawless identities converge. [...]

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<sup>72</sup> Laqueur, 135.

Another...charge against the players is that in their dress violations they—again like the “street” transvestites—transgressed the natural and fixed order of things by wilfully confusing distinctions which it was thought imperative should be kept distinct, especially within the categories of rank, class, and gender. For menials to play those of a higher rank and breeding seemed a deep violation of the principle of fixed division on which civilization rested.<sup>73</sup>

The theatre, then, serves as a site for social anxiety and paranoia: the actors demonstrate to their audiences the *behavior* of cross-dressing (and the characters often face few consequences that are not otherwise resolved with a good laugh). This demonstration of socially “unwanted” behavior calls into question issues of sexuality as intrinsically linked with physical sex and social status. The danger is that the individual audience member might observe these challenges to normative boundaries and ultimately “be led” to question constructs like the sumptuary codes and their supposed link to sexuality. For instance, one question worth exploring is: in what way precisely does effeminacy in men or masculinity in women lead to assumptions of homosexual preferences? Looking specifically at Shakespeare, for example, in lieu of explicit stage directions alluding to sexual attraction by same-sex pairings (or, sometimes, supposed same-sex pairings), the presupposition for an early modern anxiety of *homosexuality* renders the text bland, shallow, and with little substance reminiscent of the original production at all. In *The Roaring Girl*, on the other hand, Moll Frith purposefully alludes to the odd preference her lover seems to have with kissing her while she is cross-dressed in men’s attire. At times, the homosexuality present seems to take place on the part of the “duped” individual as opposed to the cross-dressed one. Do we want Orlando to give in to presumed sexual attractions toward

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<sup>73</sup> Dollimore, 290.

“Ganymede” because we know that the object of his desire is truly Rosalind? How does the text itself, missing clear, deliberate stage directions that would suggest such a thing, lead us to believe that Orlando finds the disguised Rosalind attractive as a young man in the first place? We are led to believe it is there simply because of the *potential* for anxiety. The comedy would not seem to be nearly as entertaining or funny if Orlando ignored the disguised Rosalind’s lusty stares, if the two actors “played it straight” as it were. The anxiety that even contemporary audiences feed off of, then, is the same anxiety pervasive in the seventeenth century. The cross-dressed party is the deceiver, the one who pretends, misleads, *lies*. The transvestite (whether in historical accounts or fictional ones) reveals a social anxiety in the “sinister transvestite”: a woman dressed as a man will seduce other women who will fall in love with her male disguise, while a man dressed as a woman will seduce other men who will unknowingly fall for his female disguise. These two transvestites will purposefully, and in full ill-intent, lead others to sin through the act of sodomy (either through the use of a sexual aid or through anal penetration).

The transvestite acts of gender expression might also lead to social “wishful thinking”—in an homogenized world of heteronormative sexual behaviors that exist within strict social mores and legislative boundaries, it might be simple to assume that the transvestite ultimately seeks heteronormative sex acts as well. For instance, if a woman finds herself attracted to other women, then her dressing as a man will satisfy her sexual attractions within social boundaries of heterosexual pairings. The same might be true (that is, within the realm of this form of “wishful thinking”) for the male transvestite. This thought process merely seeks to explain a behavior within the structures established by heteronormative sexual discourses. In a society that suggests the *default* sexuality is heterosexuality and the *default* gender is the one that mimics one’s physical sex, then such a conclusion reinforces the heteronormative hegemony while silencing

other interpretations fearing they will threaten the fabric of that very hegemony. Scholars of early modern drama must not only be aware of both the fear and the wishful thinking inherent in analyzing transvestite and cross-dressing phenomena, but they must also be willing to renegotiate the very manner in which we come to understand human sexuality, gender identification, and even physical sex as it applies specifically to the early moderns' (albeit limited) understanding of these concepts. The risk we run, as Traub warns, is in repeating the very narrative we seek to complicate.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See Valerie Traub, "Friendship's Loss," 121.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Mannish Cowards**

Just as humanity is a complex, ever-evolving, fluctuating entity, so should be humanity's understanding of sexuality and gender; in fact, the physical appearance of our bodies is not a reliable source as we determine our genders, as discussed in Chapter Two. In the case of hermaphrodites, the body is capable of confusing something that might appear to be rudimentary: answering the simple question "am I a boy or am I a girl?" Even when the body does offer a clear, distinct answer ("your genitalia are male" or "your genitalia are female"), the concept of a gender is an amorphous web of endless intersections. The suggestion that physical biology immediately creates one's gender definition smacks of hegemonic heteronormativity: all those with a penis identify as masculine, while all those with a vagina identify as feminine. Worse still are the lengths to which this hegemony will go to attempt to reign in and categorize the ways in which masculine or feminine individuals seek sexual satisfaction. According to the heteronormative structure, those who are masculine will seek out those who are feminine. Even the supposed sex-positive belief that "butch" lesbians will partner with "femme" lesbians, or that "fairy" gays will partner with "bear" gays, is based upon the assumption that opposites attract—the "right" or "natural" way is that masculine and feminine seek each other. The interstices created by these heteronormative expectations on genders and sexualities (or, more to the point, desires) become the Foucault-after-Nietzsche "non-places" and the sites for hegemonic struggle

as it attempts to locate, categorize, and dominate these identities.<sup>1</sup>

When applying these theories to early modern dramas,<sup>2</sup> such as Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Merchant of Venice* to name a few, scholars must proceed cautiously. Scenes in which female characters cross-dress, for instance, often elicit a peculiar sexual tension: the audience as well as the female character (and perhaps a confidante or two) are aware of the cross-dressing while a male love interest acknowledges his affections for the effeminate-looking youth. Will the male character discover the truth before he dismisses the disguised female character? Will the love-match truly work out in the end? The tension works well for the comedy, of course; the absurdity of an aristocratic man (such as Orsino) finding anything sexually appealing about a young page (Viola's chosen disguise) encourages the comedy further. It is not in the apparent struggle between Viola and Orsino that suggests homosexuality because Orsino has no lines fraught with arousal when he addresses Viola. The danger for homosexuality comes from the attentions Viola receives from Olivia—only when she acknowledges the effeminate features in Viola's disguise do we get a sense that there is a potential for a homosexual pairing. Viola reacts in a way that should elicit laughter from the audience—she is distressed and troubled that Olivia might fall in love with her while she is disguised as a young man. The comedy does resolve itself prettily: just when it seems all hope is lost and heterosexual pairings are endangered by homosexual tendencies, Sebastian and Viola are reunited. Olivia swiftly replaces the female with the male, and Orsino discovers he was in

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<sup>1</sup> In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault refers to emergence (*Entstehung*) as "...a place of confrontation, but not as a closed field offering the spectacle of a struggle among equals...it is a 'non-place,' a pure distance, which indicates that the adversaries do not belong to a common place..." (84). The adversaries (here, the hegemony and all those who see themselves as "non-normative") create a gap in their confrontation that sparks an emergence.

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen this time period and these works indeed for their familiarity, but also for their direct and unapologetic approach to the gender/sexuality question. I believe that because these concepts were not altogether solidified in the early modern period as they are now, the dramatists were in some ways more free to explore their own assumptions of gender identity and human sexualities and demonstrate the ways in which those assumptions are informed by hegemonic discourse.



love with the woman underneath the disguise all along. Hegemony prevails and heteronormativity is restored. Even Olivia's near-homosexuality (female seeking the disguised female) is actually heterosexuality. Olivia is a mannish woman; she is the head of her own household after the deaths of her father and brother, and therefore she behaves in a masculine manner.<sup>3</sup> According to the terms of heterosexuality as a desire based upon difference (thus *hetero*), it is Olivia's masculinity that finds Viola's femininity appealing, and little is to be made of their physical bodies.

Repelled by this heteronormative assumption, Madhavi Menon suggests that the "right" way to seek out a history of human sexuality is to seek out its "unhistory." She finds that scholars have too long trapped themselves within the confines of a "heterotemporality," a "heterohistory"—in this way, heterosexuality and heteronormativity have colored scholars' search for history that embraces opposition and difference rather than sameness, allowing "...chronology [to determine] identity."<sup>4</sup> She argues that "...the more scholars have tried to denaturalize sexuality and emphasize its difference over time... [the more they have] fixed sexuality in terms of hetero-time, and concludes, every time, that the history of sexuality is always the history of difference between past and present."<sup>5</sup> We might find such an assessment short-sighted—all identities are based upon difference; at its base, identity says "I am me, not you." And, in fact, Daniel Juan Gil points out that "...early modern sexuality—conceived as a special class of interpersonal relations—is rooted in the friction generated when a

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<sup>3</sup> Although gender itself is not circumstantial, it is impossible to imagine Olivia before the deaths of the principle men in her life. Olivia, as a sociosexually independent woman, defies patriarchal expectations for a feminine woman. Although Olivia's gender itself may not have changed (again, an impossible hypothetical to verify outside of the play's action), hegemonic views on her gender shift as she claims sexual agency.

<sup>4</sup> Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 1. Please note that I utilize Menon's terms further on; she alone is responsible for coining the terms "hetero-historicism," "homohistoricism," "heterohistory," "homohistory," and "unhistory."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

characteristically modern ideal of universal humanity is undercut or abraded by residual elements of a premodern social imaginary that emphasizes inherent identities and quasi-biological differences between persons.”<sup>6</sup> He argues that such friction “...energizes a privileged sexual experience in which people are driven together by the allure of a shared humanity only to be plunged apart at the last moment by a resurgent sense of fundamental, blood-borne difference and almost bodily incompatibility.”<sup>7</sup> The fight between heterohistory and homohistory rages on: are we superimposing upon a past culture an idealism of universal humanity, a shared identity? Menon says no: “...desires always exceed identitarian categories and resist being corralled into hetero-temporal camps. ...[T]he fantasy of sexual coherence is always already homophobic in its valorization of fixed difference at the expense of queer sameness, [thus] homohistory posits a methodological resistance to sexuality as historical difference.”<sup>8</sup> The history of human sexuality and gender is homophobic; in order to construct a history in the first place, we must be able to define what makes one different from another.<sup>9</sup> Homogeneity, or sameness of any degree, is dangerous and subverts proper early modern patriarchal social structures wherein even one’s permitted style of dress is predetermined upon *differences* in income and class. The distinction Menon makes in *Unhistorical Shakespeare* is that when speaking of *desires* (the very attractions themselves and not the so-called “identities”), scholars must be willing to entertain, on behalf of the society under question, that *desire* rests upon a sense of sameness across sexualities and genders.

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Juan Gil, *Before Intimacy*, xi.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>8</sup> Menon, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Menon explains further: “Difference...becomes not only the product of historical inquiry, but also its enabling promise. Without historical difference, there would be no history” (9).

How troubling to imagine that we<sup>10</sup> all desire in the same ways—that regardless if we are straight, gay, masculine, feminine, transgendered, bi-curious, fetishist, “kinkster,” we share similarities in the ways we recognize *desire* itself. In a culture where difference is so tremendously lauded, where it leaves such indelible determinations of our very sense of temporality, sameness subverts. Menon, like Traub, suggests that desire should be treated not as a fact etched in stone, teleologically, but instead as an ontological concept that can be explored through the lens of unhistoricism: “...a ‘rhizomatic’ model of affinities, in which networks of failures and successes complicate any neat mapping of the world according to organic conceptions of consequential time.”<sup>11</sup> Should we attempt to debunk the mythology of a teleological history of human sexuality and gender, we would succeed in not only coming just one step closer to understanding the texts and concepts themselves, but we could also redefine current social boundaries that intend to dictate, differentiate, and alienate sexualities and genders.

The theatrical practice of cross-dressing boy actors in order for them to portray female characters, Orgel points out, was a phenomenon that did not find great popularity in continental Europe.<sup>12</sup> Scholars like Orgel, Greenblatt, and Jardine, have found what seem to be obvious correlations between the practice of cross-dressing and the concepts of social anxiety and desire. Perhaps, this is where the friction Gil references truly lies: when we seek to locate a conceptual experience in a temporal fixed point, we cause a friction in the understanding of what these two constructs have to do with one another in the first place. For the modern audience, cross-

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<sup>10</sup> This “we” refers to all humans who have sexuality at all, including (but certainly not limited to) the classifications described here, as well as those who identify as asexual. Individuals who identify as asexual also maintain a valid sexuality, for the lack of a sexuality serves the individual as a sexuality (much like an atheist has a belief system based on a lack of a particular belief system).

<sup>11</sup> Menon, 19. Here, she refers to a concept of the “‘rhizomatic’ model of affinities” described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). As discussed at greater length in Chapter One, Traub calls for a dialogic approach to the study of sexuality and hopes that such an approach might serve to reenergize the field itself, leading to new lines of inquiry (“Friendship’s Loss,” 34).

<sup>12</sup> Orgel, “Nobody’s Perfect,” 7-8.

dressing (transvestism) is almost always associated, for better or worse, with assumptions of sexuality and gender. “Cross-dressing” in Elizabethan terms is a socioeconomic practice more than it is a sexual or gender-defining one; in fact, in her sumptuary laws Elizabeth fails to mention whether or not cross-dressing between the sexes is permissible. Because cross-dressing in Elizabethan terms is more focused on blurring the lines of socioeconomic status than sexual preference, the study of cross-dressing female characters would be much better served in terms of how well a woman was able to craft a meaningful identity outside of both her real social status and physical sex.<sup>13</sup> According to a few of Shakespeare’s leading ladies, appearances are everything. They are the first impression, the point of social and sexual distinction, but appearances also carry with them the threat of deception. If a female character is capable of dressing to appear like a young man, then could not anyone on the street do the very same? And without social boundaries to dictate who can and should wear which types of clothing, fabric, and colors, how is one to determine the social value of the person to whom one is speaking?

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<sup>13</sup> According to Brecht’s concept of the “alienation effect” (*Verfremdung*), this use of clothing difference in order to call attention to social constructs forces the audience to participate in a criticism of their own paradigmatic norms: “The attitude which he [the actor] adopts is a socially critical one. In his exposition of the incidents and in his characterization of the person he tries to bring out those features which come within society’s sphere. In this way, his performance becomes a discussion (about social conditions) with the audience he is addressing. He prompts the spectator to justify or abolish these conditions according to what class he belongs to” (“Short Description” 139). As the actors cross sociosexual boundaries by dressing as female characters, the characters they portray likewise cross sociosexual boundaries; this double-crossing forces some attention to be called to both the use of apparel as a nuance of socioeconomic status as well as to the seemingly unproblematic acceptance of young male actors dressing as women. *Verfremdung* is critical to theatre; before Brecht coined the term, he borrowed from Hegel’s *Entfremdung* to discuss alienation in terms of distancing oneself from the character portrayed. *Entfremdung* and *Verfremdung* are critical because they are “...necessary to all understanding. When something seems ‘the most obvious thing in the world’ it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up” (“Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction” 71). Only when we are distanced from what we observe are we able to luxuriate in critically viewing both the drama as well as the social conventions the drama imitates.

## Women as Boys, part one: the tricky transvestite

Returning to Stubbes' paranoia that women who choose to wear men's clothing secretly want to *be* men (what he calls the "Hermaphroditi"),<sup>14</sup> the cross-dressing of Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It* suggests that this interpretation of clothing's power over self-fashioning might have been a fairly pervasive thought in the sixteenth- and the early seventeenth-centuries England. Rosalind represents a particularly complex conundrum: she eschews both gender and even social boundaries by dressing as a man, but she also carries with her a small dagger. In Rosalind's case, of course, she uses her disguise as a form of protection—two women, she points out before their departure, are easy prey for overly zealous male predators. Rosalind calls those who would wear brave attire but still feel fearful "*mannish* cowards."<sup>15</sup> In spite of their physical bodies (whether they be female or male), those who carry weapons or otherwise dress in a way that suggests bravery and preparedness show themselves to be masculine. They *appear* to be strong, able to fight, and certainly willing to defend themselves and anyone else in their party. Those who dress in such a way but still feel fear, however, counterfeit their true internal identity so that the external shows the exact opposite. This Rosalind calls "mannish" because it is the *appearance* of masculinity without the promise of the *behavior* of masculinity.<sup>16</sup> In fact, although Rosalind seems to jeer at those who are "mannish

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<sup>14</sup> Stubbes, 38. Stubbes imagines a horrifying possibility of changing sexes as easily as one can change clothing: "...if thei [women] could as well chaunge their sexe, and put on the kinde of man, as thei can weare apparell assigned onely to manne, I thinke thei would as verely become men indeed as now thei degenerate from godlie sober women, in wearing this wanton leude kind of attire, proper onely to manne."

<sup>15</sup> *As You Like It*, 1.3.118. Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> In *Gender Trouble*, Butler takes this concept of imitating genders further when she describes such an act as parodic, even as an individual imitates his or her own gender. This imitation is not an imitation of an original; rather, it is the parody of the *notion* of an original: "In the place of an original identification which serves as a determining cause, gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody the mechanism of that construction" (188). Rosalind's criticism of men who *imitate* masculinity while not actually *embodying* masculinity should raise questions about the authenticity of masculinity. What does masculinity actually look like? What is the source of masculinity that all subsequent

cowards,” she is about to become a “mannish” woman herself—she will appear masculine, but inwardly she will behave in a feminine manner. In her essay “The Figure of Rosalind in *As You Like It*,” Margaret Boerner Beckman suggests that through the disguises employed by the two women: “...the inner ‘reality’—the woman’s fear and the man’s courage—are, in a certain light, less real than the disguising outside. The external feigning reveals the internal truth. For Rosalind *is* taller, braver, and more aggressive than Ceila, just as she is shorter, more fearful, and less physically aggressive than Orlando.”<sup>17</sup> Surely to Stubbes’ horror and in direct parallel with his fear (one might imagine), Celia refers to Rosalind’s transformation to a man as an actual one. Rather than ask her cousin “what shall I call thee when thou art *dressed like* a man,” Celia simply asks her “...when thou *art* a man?”<sup>18</sup> We might argue that Celia’s response indicates her willingness to accept a certain reality of Rosalind’s disguise—Rosalind’s costume, in a way, *is* a physical transformation.

Celia’s acceptance of Rosalind as a man (or at least as a “mannish” woman) will ultimately assist both women in keeping themselves protected in the Forest of Arden. In light of the *Anatomie of Abuses*, however, her comment suggests something altogether more culturally significant. Stubbes’ claim that “these women [those who wear the apparel of men] maie not improperly bee called Hermaphroditi, that is, Monsters of bothe kindes, halfe women, halfe men” reveals his paranoia that clothing possesses as much power, in regards to the suggestion of one’s sex (or in the case of cross-dressing women, *sexes*), as does an actual physical

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masculinities attempt to emulate? To what degree do these parodies fail or succeed in their imitations? Are the parodies subversive or mere copies? Without a source to draw from, the miming of genders in some ways destabilizes the authoritative power of hegemonic gender hierarchies. Butler explains that “...parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of the hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization” (188).

<sup>17</sup> Beckman, “The Figure of Rosalind in *As You Like It*,” 48.

<sup>18</sup> *As You Like It*, 1.3.120.

transformation from one sex to the other (or, to the modern mind, a “sex change”).<sup>19</sup> Stubbes’ anxiety clarifies the very impulse Celia and Rosalind have to choose their specific disguises. Clothing does not only act as a costume, which one can remove and replace at will, but clothing also acts as a very real physical manifestation of one’s identity. Stubbes’ paranoia is rooted in the potential for a person to remove his or her very *identity* (sexual, socioeconomic, religious, etc.) and to replace it with another identity at will. He does not remark on the sexual activities of the Hermaphroditi, but instead calls their physical bodies monstrous—they are half women (underneath the clothing) and half men (by virtue of the clothing). Stubbes’ argument rests almost entirely on the concept of the sinister transvestite,<sup>20</sup> expecting that all cross-dressing women will do so in order to trick and beguile (and potentially seduce) others whom they may encounter.

Through the progression of *As You Like It*, Rosalind finds herself in a tricky situation—does Celia believe Rosalind has actually changed her sex by merely dressing as a man? When Celia teases Rosalind about Orlando’s arrival in the Forest of Arden, Rosalind is forced to beg Celia to divulge his identity—in this instance, Rosalind raises a contradictory point. She exclaims: “Good my complexion! Does thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?”<sup>21</sup> Rosalind reminds Celia that her apparel has not changed her femininity, that she is still a woman underneath her clothing. The double entendre, of course, is that the actor playing Rosalind really *is* a boy, so that the cross-dressing is two-fold: the boy actor into a dress to portray female Rosalind who dons masculine attire to portray male Ganymede. Here the actor offers a verbal wink to the audience—just because he has put on

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<sup>19</sup> Stubbes, 38.

<sup>20</sup> See discussion on the sinister transvestite in Chapter Two, as well as a literary example of this paranoia in *The Roaring Girl*, examined in Chapter Four.

<sup>21</sup> *As You Like It*, 3.2.189-191.

female clothing does not mean he actually has become a female like Rosalind. Reminding observers that clothing does not actually change one's physicality is necessarily the cross-dresser's responsibility.

Despite her desire to be taken seriously as a man by the other characters (at least in the first four acts), Rosalind fears her costume could even confuse Celia or Touchstone—they should constantly be aware that in this moment she is both a man and woman. She will outwardly display man's bravery and strength while simultaneously and inwardly feeling woman's emotions and insecurity.<sup>22</sup> Beckman points out that, in addition to demonstrating masculinity through the suggested performance of bravery and strength, Rosalind also participates in a masculine form of witty rhetoric.

Her puns, witticisms, and paradoxes first of all show her as a 'masculine' intelligence, not because Shakespeare thought women incapable of wit, but because to be witty is to be able to control others and to lead them, as Rosalind leads Orlando. Wit is therefore—as an image, not as a conclusion about women—active and 'masculine' intellectual expression, as opposed to passive and 'feminine' emotional expression.<sup>23</sup>

Even after Rosalind manages to coax Celia into giving her more details of Orlando, she finds herself still reminding her cousin that she is indeed a woman. As Celia describes Orlando's appearance and behavior, Rosalind interrupts her with questions and exclamations. Annoyed,

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<sup>22</sup> Rosalind, as a female product of the patriarchy, would have understood the important difference between men and women's behaviors—men appeared strong and confident while women were allowed to express their emotions and fears. Anthony Fletcher points out that, "...masculinity implied a persistent awareness of the dangers posed by allowing the rule of emotion. Manhood was hot but it was also hard: effeminacy, or femininity, represented dilution and softening. Effeminacy was seen as a condition of instability; men could slip from their gender moorings..." (95). Rosalind as Ganymede represents the effeminate man—the proof that manliness cannot be easily mimicked by one who is not naturally masculine. She is all outward show with a soft interior; she will collapse under the pressure of masculinity.

<sup>23</sup> Beckman, 49.



Celia states, “I would sing my song without a burden—thou bring’st me out of tune,” and Rosalind replies, “Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak.”<sup>24</sup> Does Celia really expect Rosalind to sit in stony silence, listening to these teasing descriptions of Orlando, like a patriarchally-configured man might? Or is this more a moment of apology to the audience—is Rosalind actually reminding the audience once more that she cannot keep her thoughts hidden because she is not actually a man? Perhaps the true answer to this question is that Shakespeare makes a generalizing move here toward illuminating some perceived differences between women and men—perhaps this is Shakespeare reassuring his audience that clothing cannot physically change an individual’s biological sex. Rosalind is not like the cross-dressing women whose stories Montaigne encountered on his travels through France. While those women attempted to shield their femininity from their neighbors in order to enter the patriarchy from the level of masculinity, Rosalind merely crosses in order to assure safe travels. She is not committed to the role for any other purpose but to remain safe.<sup>25</sup> Rather than suggesting that she is going to attempt to portray true masculinity, Rosalind admits that she would rather portray a “mannish coward,” someone who has the appearance of a strong and brave man, but who is rather instead merely like a woman dressed in men’s attire.<sup>26</sup>

Rosalind embodies Stubbes’ warning of the monstrous hermaphrodite when she attempts to negotiate masculinity and femininity into a peculiar balance. Perhaps it is because of this heteronormative bend toward effeminate masculinity that leads Rosalind to the pseudonym of

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<sup>24</sup> *As You Like It*, 3.2.240-3.

<sup>25</sup> Rosalind says, “Were it not better,/ Because that I am more than common tall,/ That I did suit me all points like a man? A gallant curtal-axe upon my thigh,/ A boar-spear in my hand, and in my heart,/ Lie there what hidden woman’s fear there will,/ We’ll have a swashing and a martial outside,/ As many other mannish cowards have/ That do outface it with their semblances” (1.3.111-119).

<sup>26</sup> Rosalind, just as Viola does, portrays an effeminate man with greater ease and much more convincingly than she might play a man oozing with machismo. Her disguise is believable and therefore will best serve the purpose of protecting both her chastity as well as Celia’s.

Ganymede.<sup>27</sup> Bray reminds his readers that references to Ganymede were highly prevalent in early modern English literature: “The use of classical words such as Ganymede...was a moral reference point outside Christianity for someone concerned about the sinfulness or otherwise of a homosexual relationship. It was the basis for an adjustment far less dangerous than an outright rejection of Christianity and yet as effective.”<sup>28</sup> If the reference point of Ganymede would have logically brought to mind a morality outside of England’s adherence to Christianity, then could Shakespeare have been taking advantage of that “otherworldliness” of classical literature? Most of the play action in *As You Like It* takes place outside of the city walls; the characters are displaced from their civilized, Christian home and instead find themselves in “uncivilized” (although the point could be rightfully debated) and non-Christian Arden Forest.<sup>29</sup> Even Celia besmirches her face so that she is clearly an outsider; everything in the women’s displacement smacks of the other.

Rosalind, dressed as Ganymede, and Celia, dressed down socioeconomically and very nearly in blackface, not only participate in two varied forms of cross-dressing, but they do so outside of a location governed by explicit socioreligious laws. Shakespeare’s audience likely would have recognized the name Ganymede and could have understood the reference even if Rosalind had not mentioned her reason for choosing the name. But what image would have conjured up in their minds when Rosalind exclaims, with the forthrightness that only she has, that she will associate herself with the image of the “first” homosexual partner?<sup>30</sup> Surely there is a surface-level joke at play here—Rosalind’s actor refers to his own double-cross-dressing (first

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<sup>27</sup> See discussion on the ganymede in Chapter Two.

<sup>28</sup> Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 65.

<sup>29</sup> Even the marriage ceremonies of Act Five, presumably a Christian affair with the “giving” of oneself to another, are presided over by Hymen, the Greek god of marriage ceremonies.

<sup>30</sup> Rosalind’s choice in male name is an obvious nod to Zeus’s male lover, Ganymede, which could recall both homoerotic behaviors as well as simple effeminacy in young males.

as a woman, and then as a woman dressing as a boy)—but would that have been the full extent of the joke’s meaning in Shakespeare’s day? Even within the confines of Christianity, Bray offers, there was a little wiggle room that allowed for homosexual relationships—to a point. He looks to the example of the Reverend John Wilson, vicar of Arlington in Sussex:

...[he] was ejected by Parliament from his benefice in 1643. John Wilson was no sceptic: his sexual behaviour apart he was an entirely orthodox Laudian clergyman. It was then natural for him to accept conventional values, and when he set out to justify his sexual liaisons he did so within their terms. He “hath professed that he made choice to commit that act with mankind rather than with women to avoid the shame and danger that oft ensueth in begetting bastards...and hath openly affirmed that buggery is no sin.” What he was doing was edging his own sexual behaviour out of what constituted sin, while leaving the category itself intact.<sup>31</sup>

Does Rosalind not participate in the same playful reinterpretation of the rules? Granted, the Reverend Wilson was not to be persecuted until forty years after Shakespeare’s play was first performed; that anachronism aside, we cannot ignore the possibility that attitudes such as this were common enough to span decades of Christian thought. Few would have reason to doubt that Rosalind, Celia, and Orlando are anything but good Christian characters.<sup>32</sup> In all ways, they generally behave within the confines of Christian regulations; aside from the cross-dressing and near-miss homosexual antics. Could it be that Rosalind and Orlando skirt the definition of sexual “deviance”? We might find Rosalind more sexually promiscuous if she had not disguised herself as a man—although the opportunity for apparent homosexuality (from Orlando’s

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<sup>31</sup> Bray, 66.

<sup>32</sup> Stubbes would have likely been one of the few to doubt; to the strict, perhaps even Puritanical, Christian mind, women who are even willing to consider cross-dressing (either outside of their sex *or* socioeconomic class) are poor examples of “good” Christian women.

viewpoint anyway) presents itself on more than one occasion, Rosalind and Orlando will remain chaste as a heterosexual couple.

Why, then, would Rosalind choose Ganymede for her disguise? She is careful not to attempt the look of a grown man (the absence of a beard would have been quite telling, particularly for forest-dwellers), but she is dressed as a (consenting, young) male nonetheless. Orgel suggests that the disguise is chosen within the early modern English understanding of female sexual response and appetite. He explains that the female sexual appetite was considered overly passionate, the unquenchable version of the male libido: "...that it is, in short, male sexuality out of control: the great danger in women's sexuality is its power to evoke men's sexuality."<sup>33</sup> If women themselves were predisposed to an insatiable sexual appetite and could also entice men to succumb to their own sexual appetites, then Rosalind as a woman in the forest (outside of civilized rules and conventions) might have proven too much for Orlando to handle. "...Rosalind's male disguise would be, in the deepest sense, for Orlando's benefit, not for Rosalind's," Orgel argues; "it would constitute a way around the dangers of the female libido."<sup>34</sup> Orgel imagines a Rosalind who convinces Orlando to accept her disguise as reality, but he also suggests that Rosalind wearing the costume offers her a subtle way around inevitable male – female sexual attraction.<sup>35</sup> Rosalind's disguise, however, is not devised in terms of guarding her own wild female sexual nature; she is much more concerned with the wild sexual nature of men she and Celia may encounter on their travels. By the time they arrive in Arden, they are both

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<sup>33</sup> Orgel, *Impresonations*, 63.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Certainly, Orgel's rendering of Rosalind's costume here as convincing is true to the text—Orlando claims that he did not recognize her as Rosalind and believes she was instead Rosalind's brother. As Duke Senior begins to make connections between Rosalind's personality and Ganymede's, Orlando agrees: "My lord, the first time that I ever saw him / Methought he was a brother to your daughter" (5.4.28-9). Although Orlando continues his speech to contradict his initial belief about Rosalind and Ganymede, he does not suggest that he believes Ganymede to be anything other than what he has claimed to be: a saucy young shepherd. To Orlando's estimation, Rosalind has played the male role masterfully.

fully invested in their disguises. Suggesting that her disguise does anything beyond offer protection flirts dangerously with speculation and inference—the text simply does not allude to the use of female cross-dress as a means to restrain the female libido. Orgel’s point itself supports the heteronormative assumption that underlying all choices in gender expression is a correlation with sexuality.

In her epilogue, Rosalind further complicates matters when she claims that she is not female: “Even after the wooing has been successfully accomplished, the play insists that the wife is really a boy—and this too, of course, may be a way of offering Orlando (or any number of spectators of either sex) what he ‘really’ wants.”<sup>36</sup> Orgel suggests here that Orlando, seduced not only by Rosalind but also by Ganymede “himself,” has (un)wittingly entered into a homosexual, sodomitic marriage, while at once also entering into a socially appropriate and functional heterosexual marriage. Again, the marriage is not strictly homosexual—one partner is clearly male (masculine) while the other is clearly female (or feminine). According to the text itself, interactions between Orlando and Ganymede are strictly homosocial. Orlando consistently reaffirms his love for Rosalind while likewise acknowledging that (at most) Ganymede’s spirit reminds Orlando of Rosalind’s. Orlando does not wonder if he is attracted to this boy; there is no moment of clear sexual confusion for this masculine male.<sup>37</sup> The first scene of Act Four reveals Rosalind’s plan to test Orlando’s affection for her. In spite of Orlando’s use of “you” when addressing Ganymede for Rosalind, the text consistently reinforces Rosalind’s mockery of a specific woman. Orlando never loses step or believes he is actually speaking to Rosalind, buying into Ganymede’s disguise the entire time. Throughout this interaction, both Rosalind and

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<sup>36</sup> Orgel, 63-4.

<sup>37</sup> It is here that directors and actors make their own assumptions and choices; modern adaptations of the play are examined further in the concluding chapter. Should a director choose to take advantage of the *potential* for homosexual attraction within *As You Like It*, that director makes a decision that is not directly informed by the original content of the play itself.

Orlando alternate between addressing Ganymede as Rosalind and directly referencing the “false” representation of Rosalind through Ganymede’s interpretation. For instance, Rosalind addresses this purposefully confusing scene directly: “...if I were your mistress....”<sup>38</sup> She then refers to herself as Rosalind (“Am not I your Rosalind?”)<sup>39</sup> and states, “Well, in her person, I say I will not have you.”<sup>40</sup> This exchange leads Orlando to refer to Ganymede as both Rosalind and her stand-in. The fluidity with which both characters treat the identity of a love interest complicates any reading of Orlando’s sexuality. Jean Howard argues:

The most unusual aspect of her behavior is that while dressed as a man, Rosalind impersonates a woman, and that woman is herself—or, rather, a self that is the logical conclusion of Orlando’s romantic, Petrarchan construction of her. Saucy, imperious, and fickle by turns, Rosalind plays out masculine constructions of self, offers women a choice between simple identification with male selves—which is how she reads the meaning of crossdressing—or simple inscription within patriarchal constructions of the feminine.<sup>41</sup>

Orlando, overcome by his “Petrarchan construction” of Rosalind does not seem troubled by his role-playing with the supposed Ganymede. In a way, as Howard points out, this playacting under the auspices of Rosalind’s disguise reinscribes patriarchal expectations of gender roles; it “...reveals the constructed nature of patriarchy’s representations of the feminine and shows a woman manipulating those representations in her own interest, theatricalizing for her own purposes what is assumed to be innate, teaching her future mate how to get beyond certain

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<sup>38</sup> *As You Like It*, 4.1.77.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.81.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.84.

<sup>41</sup> Jean Howard, “Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England,” 435.

ideologies of gender to more enabling ones.”<sup>42</sup> As Rosalind educates her love interest in the “appropriate” ways to woo her, she manages to reaffirm a woman’s role within the patriarchy. In this way, Orlando’s sexuality cannot realistically be called into question: as a masculine male, he is receiving proper guidance on the expected roles of men and women. Even during the pretended marriage scene, over which Celia presides, Orlando appears to be marrying both his imagined Rosalind as well as Ganymede who takes her place. Orlando does not seem as though he is interested in male sexual partners when he first meets Rosalind; he comes across early on as a heterosexual man who is attracted to a woman.<sup>43</sup>

### Boys as Women

Drawing from Shakespeare’s comedies which include female characters who cross-dress, Juliet Dusinberre challenges her readers to consider not only the reason behind using boy actors to portray women but also what such a choice demonstrates about social concerns for masculinity and femininity. She concludes “Disguise and the Boy Actor,” saying, “The masculine woman’s claim that feminine clothes did not necessarily express a feminine nature was vital to the theatre’s justification of the boy actor and the woman in disguise. The boy actor prompted the creation of boyish heroines.”<sup>44</sup> Dusinberre’s closing argument here is crucial to

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<sup>42</sup> Howard, “Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England,” 435.

<sup>43</sup> Upon first meeting Rosalind, Orlando finds himself tongue-tied and cannot issue a word of gratitude after she offers him her necklace as a token of fortune: “Can I not say, I thank you? My better parts / Are all thrown down, and that which here stands up / Is but a quintain, a mere lifeless block” (1.2.238-40). And again, he acknowledges his frustration at his speechlessness: “What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue? / I cannot speak to her, yet she urged conference” (1.2.246-7). As a heterosexual man seeking a heterosexual female, Orlando demonstrates his own response to his attraction to Rosalind in his inability to cultivate a conversation that might effectively woo her. Orlando does not suddenly change his sexuality when he meets Rosalind disguised as Ganymede in the forest of Arden. His heterosexuality offers a guide for his interactions with Ganymede; he has no lines that explicitly reveal a budding potential homosexual attraction to Ganymede (a false one at that, as the audience as well as Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone, are well aware of the disguise).

<sup>44</sup> Dusinberre, “Disguise and the Boy Actor,” 271. Dusinberre refers to an early modern English archetype of the “masculine woman,” particularly as she is portrayed in drama.

her entire examination of the boy actor. She maintains that a female character unencumbered by the cultural expectations of gender that are immediately evoked by particular apparel is a woman who deepens her own exploration of femininity beyond any limits placed upon her. Apparel, DusiBerre keenly points out, would have been considered a disguise in any context (cross-dressing or not) and especially within the context of the theatre:

Defending their own theatrical practice the dramatists reinforced the feminism of the masculine woman. They claimed that all clothes are a form of disguise and that theatrical disguise could be a revelation of truth about men and women. ...[A] woman in disguise—or the masculine woman in breeches—is changed by her male dress only because it allows her to express a part of her nature which society suppresses.... Disguise makes a woman not a man but a more developed woman.<sup>45</sup>

Apparel leads to a sort of liberation in order to express all parts of the Self that otherwise would have suffered regulation and forced silence through the restriction of socially crafted concepts of “proper” gender expression. Disguise allows for a particular safety in self-expression: the mask permits us to behave in a way that may be otherwise unbecoming or uncharacteristic according to social boundaries and expectations. And, more to DusiBerre’s point, disguise on the early modern stage offered compelling suggestions as to the extent to which a woman might go to locate her sense of femininity. She might even find it in masculine attire.

Orgel suggests that the use of male actors in female roles says less about the depths of gender expression and more about the sexual correlation between boys and women:

“...[E]roticized boys appear to be a middle term between men and women, and far from precluding the love of women, they are represented as *enabling* figures, as a way of getting from

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<sup>45</sup> DusiBerre, 232-3.



men to women. But they also destabilize the categories, and question what it means to be a man or a woman.”<sup>46</sup> Orgel makes a compelling case for the possible homogeneity between boys and women as sexual conquests for men—boys serving as a sort of (non-)normative homoerotic stepping-stone toward the heteronormative sexual pairing with women—Rosalind does not put on her male attire for Orlando’s benefit, nor does she expect to encounter him within the Forest of Arden. Suggesting that the boys serve as a stepping-stone toward proper heteronormative couplings (that would presumably lead to procreation) offers the paradox that in this case homoerotic behavior somehow supports or falls in line with the patriarchy.

In this way, cross-dressing reinforces heterosexuality by suggesting the correlation between effeminate men/boys and women as sexual partners and conquests of masculine males. Perhaps if she had devised from the beginning a way to be close to Orlando without appearing as his Rosalind, then Orgel’s argument would be entirely indisputable. Rosalind, however, chooses the name “Ganymede” for no ulterior purpose aside from desiring to equate herself with the consort of Jove: “I’ll have no worse name than Jove’s own page,<sup>47</sup> / And therefore look you call me Ganymede.”<sup>48</sup> And when she does finally encounter Orlando (first via his inane love poetry she collects from the trees), Rosalind is stunned that he should be in the Forest of Arden as

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<sup>46</sup> Orgel, *Impersonations*, 63.

<sup>47</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the early modern audience would have understood a “page” to be “a boy, a youth,” “a boy or youth employed as the personal attendant and messenger of a person of high rank,” or even in a more depreciative manner as “a youth or man of low status; a commoner, a peasant, a labourer.” Perhaps Rosalind’s use of the word “page” here in reference to Ganymede’s relationship to Zeus would be as the god’s personal attendant. Although the name Ganymede likely suggested to the early modern audience a homoerotic pairing, Rosalind here does not seem to acknowledge that suggestion. Again, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “Ganymede” could mean either “a cupbearer, a youth who serves out liquor” or “a catamite;” there is potential in Rosalind’s use of the coupling between the words “Ganymede” and “page” that Shakespeare’s audience would have understood a page to have the potential to serve as both a cupbearer as well as a catamite to his superior. Although Rosalind’s claim is innocent enough (she disguises herself as a page and chooses a name of the most well-known page in all of Greek mythology), the double-entendre would likely not have been lost on the early modern audience.

<sup>48</sup> *As You Like It*, 1.3.121-2.

well.<sup>49</sup> Rosalind realizes at this point, after having already encountered some inhabitants of the Forest, that she is invested in the disguise and character of Ganymede. She has no choice but to continue with her original plan: “Alas the day, what shall I do with my doublet and hose? [...] But doth he know that I am in this forest and in man’s apparel?”<sup>50</sup> In the time it takes for Celia to tease Rosalind with the knowledge she so desperately desires of Orlando, he and Jaques appear, verbally jousting with one another. Although Rosalind is hidden and potentially still has not yet been seen by Orlando, she cannot resist the urge to continue with her disguise and “...speak to him like a saucy lackey and under that habit play the knave with him.”<sup>51</sup> While Orgel makes an astute point in drawing correlations between the sexualities of boys and women as perceived by the patriarchy, it is difficult to entirely agree with him that Rosalind makes this move with any specific intent, or that Shakespeare necessarily attempted to lead his audiences to this conclusion as well.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *As You Like It*, 3.2.205-211.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.2.212-3, 222-3.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.2.287-8.

<sup>52</sup> To my counterargument, Orgel might reply, “The peculiar and pathological element in this is not that Orlando is therefore involved in playing a love scene with a man. It is that so few critics...have ever remarked that the model for it must be a homosexual flirtation: the name Ganymede cannot be used in the Renaissance without this connotation. But there is no indication whatever that Shakespeare is doing something sexually daring there, skating on thin ice” (“Nobody’s Perfect,” 22). Because Shakespeare is not participating in a presumably dangerous or daring dialogue with his audience, it is important that we then look at just how heteronormative this instance of potential homosexuality truly is (either male-male or female-female, for neither Orlando nor Orsino are the only possible love-matches for the cross-dressed women). Rosalind’s choice in the name “Ganymede” is significant as far as it recalls the Jove/Ganymede classical love story. Suggesting that Rosalind’s pseudonym is an overt and calculated effort to participate in a presumably homosexual affair is far-reaching. It is possible that Rosalind’s choice alludes less to sexual activity and more to gender identity. If the early modern perception of Ganymede was an effeminate male who was the object of masculine male desires, then perhaps Rosalind’s choice suggests an “awareness” of her effeminacy. Speaking purely in traditional and patriarchal terms, a cross-dressed woman might pass more easily for an effeminate male than for a masculine one. Foucault points out that it was the effeminate male that caused the greatest distress for many of the ancients: “...for the Greeks it was the opposition between activity and passivity that was essential, pervading the domain of sexual behaviors and that of moral attitudes as well; thus, it was not hard to see how a man might prefer males without anyone even suspecting him of effeminacy, provided he was active in the sexual relation and active in the moral mastering of himself. On the other hand, a man who was not sufficiently in control of his pleasures—whatever his choice of object—was regarded as ‘feminine’ The dividing line between a virile man and an effeminate man did not coincide with our opposition between hetero- and homosexuality; nor was it confined to the opposition between active and passive homosexuality” (*The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, 85). According to Foucault, effeminacy in either the object or the lover does not dictate either

## Women as Boys, part two: (nearly) missed connections

The cross-dressing ideology within which Viola and Rosalind participate does not indicate male-to-potential-male homosexuality. Their cross-dressing is not about homosexuality, as far as the men are concerned. Neither Orsino nor Orlando suffers from sexual confusion when their love interests are dressed as men. Orlando is reserved from sharing this confusion with Orsino; he does not come to discover Rosalind's true sex until after she emerges in a gown. The closest he comes to any confusion whatsoever regarding Rosalind's identity as Ganymede is when he confesses to Duke Senior that he thought Ganymede was the Duke's son.<sup>53</sup> Rosalind's masculine charade convinces Orlando well enough to the point that his trust in the disguise does not allude to any suspicion or chance of discovery. If Rosalind wants to legally marry Orlando and set the play's events to right, she will have to do so once the nature of her disguise is revealed. Utterly defenseless to the disguises, on the other hand, and the plays' true love victims, are the women: particularly Olivia and Phebe. They too find the masculine disguises convincing, but they are also sexually attracted to the "fair youths."<sup>54</sup> If anyone in the plays is at risk of falling prey to sinister transvestism (tricking an individual of the same-sex into sexual attraction), it is the women.

Traub examines *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, depending upon their moments of transvestism to point out in which ways Rosalind and Viola both shun and reinforce the socio-sexual expectations of their respective patriarchies. Traub ultimately argues that, "...when homoeroticism is not a mutual investment it becomes problematic. [...] When homoerotic exchanges threaten to replace heterosexual bonds, when eroticism is collapsed into anxiety about

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hetero- or homosexuality in either partner. Effeminacy for the ancients rested upon the shoulders of immoderation, not merely in clothing choices or even in preferences of sexual partners.

<sup>53</sup> *As You Like It*, 5.4.28-34.

<sup>54</sup> In these interactions, I assume flattery and marriage proposals to indicate sexual attraction.

reproduction, then homoeroticism is exorcized at the same time as the female gender is resecured in the patriarchal order.”<sup>55</sup> In the first instance, when homoeroticism faces the challenge of unrequited advances (such as in the case of Phebe/Rosalind and Olivia/Viola), it cannot survive. Rosalind and Viola must relent and admit the truth: that they are in fact women as well.<sup>56</sup> Despite her apparent efforts to thwart Phebe’s advances, Rosalind does enjoy being the object of so much desire.<sup>57</sup> As Traub points out, it appears that Rosalind/Ganymede’s source of enjoyment stems almost entirely from a sense of sexual *power*. Rosalind is blissfully in control of *two* sexual partnerships: hers with Orlando, and Silvius’ with Phebe. This is a woman who otherwise would not have enjoyed such power; it is extraordinarily likely that Rosalind would not have even had the power to exert her will upon her own choice in husbands. Referring to Olivia’s unrequited love to Viola/Cesario, Traub points out that Viola finds herself both in love with her master Orsino as well as the object of Olivia’s desire, an extremely alluring position.<sup>58</sup> *Twelfth Night* is much more rife than is *As You Like It* with a struggle to negotiate a manageable balance between desire and anxiety, particularly because Olivia is far more aggressive in her advances toward Viola/Cesario than Phebe is toward Rosalind/Ganymede.<sup>59</sup> This balancing act finds at its very core the struggle to negotiate one’s way around the “unnatural” swerve toward

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<sup>55</sup> Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 138-9.

<sup>56</sup> The unions must “naturally” dissolve because they cannot be sustained within patriarchal normative expectations of marriage. Phebe and Olivia unwittingly face the reality that they have fallen in love with a cross-dressed woman.

<sup>57</sup> Traub refers to the instance where Rosalind forces Silvius to listen as s/he reads the letter Phebe wrote to Ganymede: “[and] why does s/he put Silvius through the exquisite torment of hearing Phebe’s love letter to Ganymede read aloud, if not to aggrandize her own victorious position as male rival? (IV.iii.14-64). Indeed, as a male, her sense of power is so complete that s/he presumes to tell Silvius to tell Phebe, ‘that if she love *me*, I charge her to love *thee*’ (IV.iii.71-2)” (126, emphasis original).

<sup>58</sup> Referring to Viola/Cesario’s line that she finds herself in “too hard a knot for [herself] t’untie” (II.ii.25-41), Traub suggests that “[the] implied double negative of a *knot* that *cannot* be untied is precisely the figuration of her complex erotic investments: s/he ‘fonds’ on her master, while simultaneously finding erotic intrigue and excitement as the object of Olivia’s desire. The flip side of her anxiety about Olivia’s desire is her own desire to be the *object* of Olivia’s desire. This desire s/he can (*k*)not untie because of its status as negation” (131).

<sup>59</sup> The women’s advances might be explained simply by socioeconomic status. As a social inferior, Phebe is not free to pursue Rosalind/Ganymede aggressively, whereas Olivia (as the social superior) seems to take advantage of her freedom in order to go as far as to trap Viola/Cesario into a romantic relationship with her.

homosexual desire (and remaining as the object of another's homosexual desire) and the "natural" straight line toward heterosexual desire (and the promise of a procreative love-match). Although both plays conclude with the reinstating of the women within the patriarchal order (through heterosexual marriage and the avoidance of any clandestine homoerotic marriages), Traub insists that both Rosalind and Viola exist as subverters of the patriarchy from within.<sup>60</sup>

Almost immediately, Olivia falls in love with Viola cross-dressed as Cesario. Before Viola enters Olivia's home, the countess is given a physical description of Orsino's new messenger, and the description favors youthfulness and effeminacy.<sup>61</sup> According to Malvolio, Cesario is "very well-favored, and he speaks very shrewishly. One would think his mother's milk were scarce out of him."<sup>62</sup> Malvolio purposefully uses terms that would evoke the effeminacy of a prepubescent boy; in addition to being good-looking and noticeably young, Cesario also has the high-pitched voice of a woman.<sup>63</sup> This is not the first time Viola's male disguise has been accused of effeminacy; even Orsino acknowledges this trait in him, but he finds it favorable for softening Olivia's otherwise stony exterior. "It shall become thee well to

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<sup>60</sup> Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 143.

<sup>61</sup> According to Stephen Greenblatt, "...in effect, a boy is still close to the state of a girl and passes into manhood only when he has put enough distance between himself and his mother's milk. If a crucial step in male individuation is separation from the female, this separation is enacted inversely in the rites of cross-dressing; characters like Rosalind and Viola pass through the state of being men in order to become women. Shakespearean women are in this sense the representation of Shakespearean men, the projected mirror images of masculine self-differentiation" (*Shakespearean Negotiations*, 92). Recalling Greenblatt's argument, Anthony Fletcher argues that in this moment, Malvolio makes a clear case for the suggestion that boys were more like women than they were men: "The crossdressing pointed up the physical process of gender development which underpinned the whole structure of Tudor and early Stuart patriarchy. [...] Malvolio's introduction of Viola, dressed as Cesario when he stands at Olivia's door, expresses this notion of a time when males showed the attributes of both genders" (90).

<sup>62</sup> *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.159-161.

<sup>63</sup> According to the editors' footnote to the 2009 Folger edition of *Twelfth Night*: "[shrewishly] usually means 'like a bad-tempered woman,' but here it seems to mean merely 'like a woman.'" Of course, it would not be a logical stretch to imagine that Shakespeare intentionally draws a connection between Viola's stubbornness as Cesario and that of the stereotypical early modern "shrew." When Orsino commands Cesario not to leave Olivia's home without first receiving an audience with her (1.4.17), it is reasonable to imagine that Viola's estimation of stubbornness looks very similar to the behavior of a shrew.

act my woes,” Orsino explains to the stunned Viola. “She will attend it better in thy youth / Than in a nuncio’s of more grave aspect.”<sup>64</sup> When Viola rejects this assertion, Orsino responds:

Dear lad, believe it;  
For they shall yet belie thy happy years  
That say thou art a man. Diana’s lip  
Is not more smooth and rubious, thy small pipe  
Is as the maiden’s organ, shrill and sound,  
And all is semblative a woman’s part.<sup>65</sup>

Orsino is convinced that a more masculine man will fail to woo Olivia properly; she will only respond to a youth of Cesario’s appearance. Because Cesario, as a supposed young man, has not apparently undergone puberty, his voice is reminiscent of a woman’s still (worse luck for Viola—she must not be particularly skilled at playing the man). Unbeknownst to either Orsino or Viola as Cesario, Olivia finds the disguise sexually attractive and begins to fall in love with the cross-dressed woman.

The attraction, to borrow Stubbes’ terminology and Shakespeare’s, is *monstrous*, but it is only monstrous as far as Viola understands that she is not truly a man to whom Olivia *should* feel attracted. Viola, as a monster, is incapable of accepting proposals of love from either Olivia or Orsino. As a physical female, Viola understands the risk she runs in allowing Olivia to continue her attraction to another woman (albeit disguised). Cross-dressed as a male, Viola likewise understands that her attraction to Orsino cannot be pursued while she is in disguise. According to Stubbes, those women who change their sex at will are monsters; Viola feels precisely the same way. Viola seems to see herself as a worse monster than a woman who merely plays dress-

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<sup>64</sup> *Twelfth Night*, 1.4.28-30.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4.32-37.

up in men's clothing; instead, she is incapable of pursuing her reproductive (and socially prescribed) sexual role. Neither man nor woman, Viola is a monstrous outsider who does not have a clear place within the patriarchy. When Malvolio hands over Olivia's ring to Viola, she realizes the consequences her cross-dressing has earned:

Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness  
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.  
How easy is it for the proper false  
In women's waxen hearts to see their forms!  
[...]  
How will this fadge? My master loves her dearly,  
And I, *poor monster*, fond as much on him,  
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.  
What will become of this? As I am man,  
My state is desperate for my master's love.  
As I am woman (now, alas the day!),  
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!<sup>66</sup>

Viola takes sole responsibility for this *monstrous* love triangle—because she has crossed over sexual boundaries, she has sacrificed the ability to be loved by the object of her desire (opposite sex) while also risking the attraction of the object of *his* desire (same sex). Viola plays Stubbes' hermaphroditic monster, but she cannot have it both ways. She will not be loved by Orsino who loves Olivia, and she does not wish to be loved by Olivia in favor of Orsino.<sup>67</sup> Viola's

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<sup>66</sup> *Twelfth Night*, 2.2.27-30, 33-9. Emphasis mine.

<sup>67</sup> Orgel argues in "Nobody's Perfect" that because homosexuality seemed to have been given a sense of social acceptance in the early modern period (evidenced by the cross-dressing boy actors), the real focus was on women's

monstrosity is that she has trapped two innocent lovers into a potential fate of lovelessness. DusiBerre suggests that Viola's monstrosity goes further than sexuality and attraction; instead, she says, it relies upon social order: "Viola was a monster on two counts: a man acting a woman and a woman in breeches. The woman in theatrical disguise aroused the same fear in moralists as the masculine woman in breeches. [...] Trousers on a woman, whether on the stage or off it, spelled insubordination."<sup>68</sup> According to DusiBerre, the particular boundary crossed is primarily social; Viola (and the boy actor playing her) shirks her social responsibilities and restrictions in order to, ironically, survive within that very same social order that condemns her. Monsters, particularly those women who might as well be Stubbes' *Hermaphroditi*, not only exist on the fringe of social order, but they also have no clearly constructed social boundaries or regulations that guide their behaviors in the first place. Viola's attempt to survive has landed her in the dangerous position of being a socially untethered and unregulated monster.

Phebe, on the other hand, is a woman whose behavior and attitude toward men, specifically toward Silvius, suggest an utter lack of appreciation for patriarchal governance over women's desires.<sup>69</sup> Traub argues in *Desire and Anxiety* that in *As You Like It*, Phebe finds

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sexuality at all. He says, "[h]omosexuality in this culture appears to have been less threatening than heterosexuality, and only in part because it had fewer consequences and was easier to desexualize. The reason always given for the prohibition of women from the stage was that their chastity would thereby be compromised, which is understood to mean that they would become whores. Behind the outrage of public modesty is a real fear of women's sexuality, and more specifically, of its power to evoke men's sexuality. This is dangerous because it is not subject to rational control, which is a way of saying that it is not subject to any other kind of authority either—what from one perspective was slavery to passion, from another was a declaration of independence" (26). Although Orgel is right to point out that aspects of women's sexuality were a main concern for the early moderns, such a focus does not necessarily suggest that homosexuality carried *fewer* consequences. In fact, this assessment ignores homosexuality between other women as well, which, as discussed in Chapter Two, had massive consequences attributed to it (such as death or separation of the couple), particularly in cases where a sexual aid was implemented. Women's sexuality is dangerous not because it is limited to evoking only men's sexuality; men's sexuality is dangerous not because it is limited to evoking only women's sexuality. The point that needs to be made clear here is that any sexuality *at all* is dangerous, and in the case of Rosalind and Viola, they represent the worst consequence behind female cross-dressing: awakening the passions in members from both sexes.

<sup>68</sup> DusiBerre, 231.

<sup>69</sup> As a country woman, Phebe is not as refined as her aristocratic female counterparts. Perhaps this lack of refinement in Phebe is meant to suggest that women raised outside of the confines of the city are given to "revert" to



herself not only attracted to the young male Ganymede but actually to Rosalind's femininity: "Consciously, of course, Phebe believes Ganymede to be a man, and is thus merely following the dominant heterosexual course. And yet, what attracts Phebe to Ganymede are precisely those qualities that could be termed 'feminine.'"<sup>70</sup> Ganymede's effeminacy seems to confuse Phebe, Traub points out, as she lists his positive and negative physical traits. Comparing Ganymede to a woman shows that Rosalind's femininity still comes through, but more obviously it demonstrates the early modern anxiety that women's libidos are nonselective according to the sexuality of potential partners. Women, the examples seem to say, are attracted to anyone and everyone. Thus, the female libido must be controlled and restricted. When Rosalind, dressed as Ganymede, encounters Phebe for the first time, she observes a woman who not only berates a man into humiliation but actually *emasculates* him on the very basis that he loves her. Corin invites Celia and Rosalind/Ganymede to witness Phebe's emasculation of Silvius first-hand, claiming that they will see, "...a pageant truly played / Between the pale complexion of true love / And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain...."<sup>71</sup> Rosalind immediately decides, being the expert in love-matching as she feels she is, that she will "...prove a busy actor in their play."<sup>72</sup> Rosalind

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a form of unbridled female sexuality. She attempts to actively pursue Ganymede rather than allowing him to pursue her (as Silvius does). The ways in which the city governs female sexuality as opposed to the dangers of allowing a woman to develop a sexuality free from this government is explored in greater detail in Chapter Four with the plays *The Roaring Girl* and *Love's Cure*.

<sup>70</sup> Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 125.

<sup>71</sup> *As You Like It*, 3.4.48-50.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.4.55. Of course, by play's end, Rosalind demonstrates her ability not only to interfere in the love of another couple, but, and more to the point, also her prowess at uniting warring couples. Although Rosalind does have a knack for matchmaking to some extent, we should be careful to congratulate her too much—according to the match she makes between Phebe and Silvius, the two are paired as a sort of after-thought. There is no one else for Phebe to marry, Silvius is available (and in love with Phebe, all the more luck for her), so they seem to have no other choice but to be together. Phebe herself makes the unfortunate promise that she will marry no other man but Ganymede, unless she herself refuses the marriage and will then instead unite with Silvius (5.4.14-15). Rosalind participates in a clever ruse that results in the "appropriate" heteronormative love matches among the three couples, but she does not *actually* teach Phebe to love Silvius in the way that Silvius loves Phebe. For the sake of this comedy's tidy ending, however, such a distinction might not seem relevant besides as an attempt to revoke any pride Rosalind may have in her own designs.

immediately sets to work, demonstrating the best way to deal with someone as hot tempered and unpredictable as Phebe: meeting her temper blow for blow.

Both Rosalind and Viola, as the “right” people to accomplish the goal of wooing, woo unintentionally. As women who are deeply in love, it takes Rosalind and Viola no time at all to realize that they have become the object of another woman’s desire. Upon hearing Phebe’s initial remark to her, Rosalind realizes the precise type of seduction this woman prefers. Phebe exclaims, “Sweet youth, I pray you chide a year together! / I had rather hear you chide than this man woo.”<sup>73</sup> Rosalind determines to prove her theory to Silvius: “...she’ll fall in love with my anger. If it be so, as fast as she answers thee with frowning looks, I’ll sauce her with bitter words.”<sup>74</sup> She warns Phebe that she is “...falsar than vows made in wine,” someone whose words cannot be taken too seriously, someone whose promises will prove impossible to keep.<sup>75</sup> In Phebe’s famous laundry list of what she likes best (and least) about the young man who treats her with disdain:

’Tis but a peevish boy—yet he talks well.  
But what care I for words? Yet words do well  
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.  
It is a pretty youth—not very pretty—  
But sure he’s proud, and yet his pride becomes him.  
He’ll make a proper man. The best thing in him  
Is his complexion; and faster than his tongue  
Did make offence, his eye did heal it up.

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<sup>73</sup> *As You Like It*, 3.5.65-6.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.5.68-70.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.5.74.

He is not very tall, yet for his years he's tall;  
His leg is but so-so, and yet 'tis well.  
There was a pretty redness in his lip,  
A little riper and more lusty red  
Than that mixed in his cheek. 'Twas just the difference  
Betwixt the constant red and mingled damask.<sup>76</sup>

Although Rosalind's initial intent is to work her way into the love-match between Silvius and Phebe in order to satisfy her own desire to be matched with Orlando, she ultimately manipulates Phebe into falling in love with *her*. The very demonstration alone that Phebe is easily wooed by one who will ignore her and treat her as badly as she treats Silvius (a bit of tit-for-tat works wonders) ultimately suggests that Rosalind derives her own sense of pleasure from being the object of *everyone's* desires.<sup>77</sup>

Rosalind is a woman who has, in some ways, been released from the patriarchal restrictions that exist outside of the Forest of Arden. Although the majority of her actions are motivated almost entirely by her reunion with that patriarchy (seeking to disguise her femininity for fear of danger and manipulating Orlando to demonstrate his undying love for his Rosalind), she revels in the subversion if even briefly. She overcomes Orlando almost immediately, putting him through the paces of an imaginary, fickle, yet domineering female lover who does not properly belong to the patriarchy. Rosalind delights in forcing Phebe to submit to a system of

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<sup>76</sup> *As You Like It*, 3.5.111-124.

<sup>77</sup> Traub points out that "...what attracts Phebe to Ganymede are precisely those qualities that could be termed 'feminine.' [...] During the first half of [Phebe's recollection of Ganymede's physical appearance], as she measures Ganymede against the standard of common male attributes—height, leg—Phebe fights her attraction, syntactically oscillating between affirmation and denial: he is; he is not. In the last four lines, as she 'feminizes' Ganymede's lip and cheek, she capitulates to her desire altogether" (*Desire and Anxiety* 125).

gender roles that revolve around a sequence of boundaries and consequences. “In fact,” Traub points out:

the male and female homoeroticism of both plays [*As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*] interrupts the ideology of a ‘natural’ love based on complementary yet oppositional genders. In so doing, the deviations from the dominant discourse of desire circulating throughout these texts transgress the Law of the Father, the injunction that sexuality will follow gender in lining up according to a ‘natural’ binary code. By refusing such arbitrary divisions of desire, homoeroticism in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* disrupts the cultural code that keeps both men and women in line, subverting patriarchy from within.<sup>78</sup>

Ganymede and Cesario stand at the pivot-point between homosexuality and heterosexuality, the crux at which gender identity and sexual attraction intersect. Although Viola/Cesario expresses anxiety while in this dubious position, Rosalind/Ganymede plays with it and takes delight in the exploitation of others’ anxieties of her/his indistinct, undefined, unrestricted gender identity. Although the patriarchy is obviously predominantly male, we must understand that females played an important role in establishing and regenerating the patriarchal codes of conduct. Just as the song from Marie/Germain’s female neighbors indicates, women reinforced and underscored the patriarchal heteronormative dogma that instructed, corrected, and punished girls until they grew to be proper women of the hegemony.<sup>79</sup> According to Rosalind’s assessment of Phebe’s behavior, the blame falls to Phebe’s presumably absent mother: “Who might be your mother, / That you insult, exult, and all at once / Over the wretched?”<sup>80</sup> Rosalind takes over

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<sup>78</sup> Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 143.

<sup>79</sup> Marie/Germain of Vitry le Francois is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>80</sup> *As You Like It*, 3.5.36-38, 58-63.

where Phebe's mother presumably failed; she offers Phebe advice (albeit in the guise of a young man, but still wholly woman) that should result in a marriage between the two apparently ill-suited "lovers." Rosalind upbraids Phebe's pride and vanity, reminding her that not every man would find her to be as attractive and lovable as Silvius believes her to be. In this way, Rosalind participates (in spite of her disguise) in the female-to-female tradition of guidance and advice that leads to woman's submission and self-regulated confinement to her "proper" place within sociosexual boundaries.

The only cross-dressed woman in Shakespeare's drama given an epilogue, Rosalind includes a verbal wink to the audience that the actor playing Rosalind would not have been a woman in Shakespeare's day; but we might also allow for a looser interpretation that perhaps Rosalind herself defies sexual classification. Rosalind states, "If I were a / woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that / pleased me, complexions that liked me and breaths / that I defied not."<sup>81</sup> By the end of the play, she has spent much greater time in the apparel of a man who pretends to behave as a woman than as the female character she supposedly is. In a way, Rosalind does not truly belong to either sex; she is neither fully man nor fully woman as determined by her dress and behavior. Although Rosalind reveals her true physical nature by the end of Act Five, the Epilogue undermines that revelation entirely. The stage direction for Rosalind and Celia at the beginning of Act Five, scene four is for them to enter undisguised. They are both to stop cross-dressing: Rosalind should wear a dress and Celia should wear a dress fitting her socioeconomic station. This simple maneuver rectifies an otherwise tricky plot point (the marriage of all the young characters) and leaves the play entirely resolved. The Epilogue, however, muddies the waters to such a degree that we are left without a clear sense about

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<sup>81</sup> *As You Like It*, Epilogue, 16-9.

Rosalind and her sex. While the character Rosalind is supposedly a woman at the end of Act Five (if appearances mean anything), the actor portraying her calls attention to the confusion brought on by cross-dressing when stating “*If I were a woman*” in the Epilogue.<sup>82</sup> Perhaps readers and audience members alike are meant to be unclear of the speaker’s physical sex by the end of this play as both a very real reminder that (particularly in the original performances) a young boy stood cross-dressed in that gown after all, and as an indicator that maybe sex does not belong to the strictures of apparel. According to Howard this moment in the play severs “...the neat convergence of biological sex and culturally constructed gender...”<sup>83</sup> While *As You Like It* seems to be a play about comical consequences of identity confusion (both sociosexual and gendered), the Epilogue undoes the careful reinscription of patriarchal authority the previous five acts seem to attempt to accomplish.<sup>84</sup> Ganymede is a fictional male portrayed by the fictional female Rosalind who is herself portrayed by a very real young male actor.<sup>85</sup> Regardless of

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<sup>82</sup> Regarding the boy actor delivering Rosalind’s epilogue, Brecht might point out: “Because he [the actor] doesn’t identify himself with him [the character] he can pick a definite attitude to adopt towards the character whom he portrays, can show what he thinks of him and invite the spectator, who is likewise not asked to identify himself, to criticize the character portrayed” (“Short Description” 139). The boy playing Rosalind who plays Ganymede calls attention to his two-fold acting in this epilogue by the simple use of the word “If.” Audiences are forced to recall that this boy is *not* the woman he portrays, just as the female character he portrays is *not* the man “she” portrays. The actor can criticize both feminine and masculine behaviors while also requiring the same criticism from the audience.

<sup>83</sup> Howard, 435.

<sup>84</sup> Howard wonders, “If a boy can so successfully personate the voice, gait, and manner of a woman, how stable are those boundaries separating one sexual kind from another, and thus how secure are those powers and privileges assigned to the hierarchically superior sex, which depends upon notions of difference to justify its dominance” (435). She finds that the theatre itself becomes a site for troubling and challenging the sociosexual boundaries in place. The theatre’s ability to question the associations between sexuality and gender in terms of apparel “...suggest something about the contradictory nature of the theatre as a site of ideological production, an institution that can circulate recuperative fables of crossdressing, reinscribing sexual difference and gender hierarchy, and at the same time can make visible on the level of theatrical practice the contamination of sexual kinds” (435). While the patriarchy, through its sumptuary laws, sermons, and pamphlets, suggests that gender and sexuality are naturally occurring, and intrinsically linked identities, the theatre reveals the true performative nature of these identities.

<sup>85</sup> Butler recalls Frederic Jameson’s notion of pastiche as opposed to parody as an act that *mocks* rather than mimics; according to Jameson: “pastiche is...a neutral practice of mimicry, without parody’s ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic” (“Postmodernism and Consumer Society” 114). Where parody pokes fun (in the hopes, one would assume, to earn a laugh from the audience), pastiche humorlessly mirrors. Butler challenges Jameson’s definition, arguing “[t]he loss of the sense of ‘the normal’...can be its own occasion for

whatever the play's previous five acts do accomplish, the final word goes to the cross-dresser, signifying that sexual and gender identities are neither one in the same, nor are they always so easily distinguishable with apparel as the early modern English patriarchy would have its citizens believe.

### Women as Boys, part three: provocative (self-)protection

Insubordination in order to survive is not entirely unheard of in Shakespeare's women; *The Merchant of Venice*'s Portia also crosses social boundaries in order to protect. Instead of protecting herself, she protects a *man*, allowing for much deeper consequences and implications altogether. Responding to Antonio's desperate letter, Portia devises a plan by which to nullify Shylock's bond. When Portia divulges the plan to her, Nerissa complains, "Why, shall we turn to men?"<sup>86</sup> Portia immediately refutes her suggestion, accusing her of being nearly a "lewd interpreter," and scolding her for this inappropriate conclusion.<sup>87</sup> While Nerissa lends a voice to conservative social anxiety, Portia waves away such (in her mind, filthy) fears. Crossing social boundaries (as well as sexual ones), Portia intentionally disguises herself as a law clerk in order to trick Shylock into nullifying the bond; in this way, Portia defies conventional sociosexual roles and rescues a man herself. Crossing boundaries determined both by her sex as well as those established between professions, Portia makes a mockery of social guidelines that dictate

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laughter, especially when 'the normal,' 'the original' is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one *can* embody. In this sense, laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived" (189). When the audience realizes the joke was on them, the *voyeur*, all along—there is no original being copied, the parody is only miming the performing of genders that we all participate in—then the audience is free to laugh at themselves for believing in an original in the first place. Rosalind's epilogue holds a mirror to the audience, forcing them to see their own performances, the spaces where their own "authentic" genders also exist as "*ifs*."

<sup>86</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, 3.4.78.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.4.79-80.

the usage of apparel.<sup>88</sup> She misrepresents her true self twice: once as a man and again as a lawyer. Portia appears to be the epitomized version of a sexually liberated woman who shirks patriarchal proscriptions on inappropriate behavior. Unfortunately, we cannot give full credit to Portia's sexual liberation. The very fact that she had to dress as a man in order to convincingly save Antonio proves that the patriarchy is still alive and well. Portia's insubordination is not as subversive as it might seem; her deception begins and ends with the disguise (and only appears in Act Four, scene one) and does not seek to make any tangible changes to hegemonic boundaries. Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out that, "[i]f a crucial step in male individuation is separation from the female, this separation is enacted inversely in the rites of cross-dressing; characters like Rosalind and Viola pass through the state of being men in order to become women. Shakespearean women are in this sense the representation of Shakespearean men, the projected mirror images of masculine self-differentiation."<sup>89</sup> Just as Menon suggests, Greenblatt bases this cross-dressing as a system of *difference* rather than a suggestion of *sameness*. Just as Rosalind and Viola identify their differences from men in order to survive, Portia recognizes a similar differentiation between male and female survival. She does not believe she is able to rescue Antonio dressed as herself; instead, she must differentiate herself from her feminine sex and from her social status if she has a hope to be taken with any seriousness at all. According to

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<sup>88</sup> Employing Brecht's technique of *Verfremdung*, Portia participates in the mimesis of both men and lawyers: "The object of the A-effect is to alienate the social gest underlying every incident. By social gest is meant the mimetic and gestural expression of the social relationship prevailing between people of a given period" ("Short Description," 139). Portia is not only expected to offer a convincing portrayal of masculinity; she must also imitate the male law clerk, taking social assumptions of both these categories and re-presenting what is considered relatively familiar (at least stereotypically so): "Characters and incidents from ordinary life, from our immediate surroundings, being familiar, strike us as more or less natural. Alienating them helps to make them seem remarkable to us" (140). When the boy actor portraying Portia takes on the persona of Balthazar, he ultimately alienates his two characters by miming the expectations the audience has for them. In this way, the audience is incapable of forgetting that Balthazar is indeed Portia in disguise, and that Portia is actually a boy actor in a wig. As Brecht puts it in "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting," the boy actor "shows" his characters rather than embodying them (137).

<sup>89</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 92.



Orgel, “Greenblatt has related the transvestism of figures like Portia, Rosalind, and Viola to the teleology of masculinity implied by the medical and gynecological theories cited earlier. [...] But even this clearly has its anxieties: Shakespeare shows on occasion an unwillingness to allow them to return to being women” (27). Indeed, we do not see Viola return to her female attire by the end of the play, but does this ignore the promise that is “to come” once the curtain descends? While Viola’s return to female attire is fraught with speculation, both Rosalind and Portia not only remove their disguises in order to reveal the trick, they also humorously restore the patriarchy by stepping back in favor of the authority of the plays’ true males.

Portia employs her disguise for the limited purpose of rescuing a male from another male using masculine systems of power. She does not disguise herself in order to fantasize (as does Rosalind) or in order to submit herself to the authority of another man (as in Viola’s case). She seeks to disguise her gender in order to assist her husband’s friend; without the male attire, Portia would not be taken seriously and Antonio would have died. According to Howard, “...Portia seems able to play the man’s part with conviction. Her actions hardly dismantle the sex-gender system; but they do reveal that masculine prerogatives are based on custom, not nature, since a woman can indeed successfully assume masculine positions of authority.” Without the disguise, Portia would not have been socially capable of rescuing Antonio; although her wit is not linked to her gender in any way, the masculine apparel lends an ethos to her cunning against Shylock. In addition to tricking Shylock, Portia likewise fools her husband. Although Portia does intentionally trick Bassanio, she does so intending to test her husband’s fortitude and presumed fidelity to a symbolic piece of jewelry. Howard explains:

By the ring trick she gains the right to sleep not with her husband but by and with herself. In a play that insists on the patriarchal authority of fathers to dispose of

daughters and that of husbands to govern wives, Portia's ability—through her impersonation of a man—to remain a married virgin and to set the terms for the loss of her virginity is a remarkable feat, as is her ability to guide Bassanio's choice of the correct casket without violating the letter of her father's will.<sup>90</sup>

Although employing deception in order to achieve her own goals, Portia's cross-dressing is not intended for sexual gratification. Portia "simply" wants agency, which is itself a socioeconomic subversion of the patriarchy rather than a sexual one. When Portia and Nerissa cross-dress and deceive their husbands, they do not intend to seduce their husbands in order to trap them into homoerotic couplings. The women hope, rather, to teach their partners the extent to which they should take their vow of fidelity seriously. Portia relies upon the symbolism of her ring (both in terms of their marriage as well as her own chastity) to reinforce her lesson to Bassanio: he should never so easily separate himself from her gifts. "If you had known the virtue of the ring," Portia complains, "Or half her worthiness that gave the ring, / Or your own honour to contain the ring, / You would not then have parted with the ring...."<sup>91</sup> Although both Portia and Nerissa tricked their husbands through the use of male disguises into parting with their wedding bands, the women make the argument that married men preserve their masculinity when they respect their marriage vows.<sup>92</sup>

In Jessica's case, however, she seeks to preserve Lorenzo's masculinity through her own preservation of femininity. When Lorenzo prepares to spirit Jessica away from (what they

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<sup>90</sup> Howard, 433.

<sup>91</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.199-202.

<sup>92</sup> Here, it is the cuckold motif that solidifies the performance of masculinity for Bassanio and Gratiano. When the two men volunteered their wedding bands as payment to the lawyer and "his" clerk, they in effect allowed themselves to be emasculated through cuckoldry. Before revealing their disguises, Portia and Nerissa threaten to welcome into their beds whichever man maintains possession over their wedding rings. Portia reasons, "Since he hath got the jewel that I loved / ... / I'll not deny him any thing I have, / No, not my body, nor my husband's bed / ... / I'll have that doctor for my bedfellow." Nerissa agrees: "And I his clerk: therefore be well advis'd / How you do leave me to mine own protection" (5.1.224, 227-228, 233-235)

perceive is) Shylock's oppression in the second act of *The Merchant of Venice*, Jessica agrees to disguise herself as a page, Lorenzo's torch-bearer.<sup>93</sup> Jessica fears that her own lover will neither recognize her nor desire her once she reveals herself in male attire: "I am glad 'tis night—you do not look on me,— / For I am much ashamed of my exchange: / But love is blind, and lovers cannot see / The pretty follies that themselves commit, / For if they could, Cupid himself would blush / To see me thus transformed to a boy."<sup>94</sup> Convinced Lorenzo would be ashamed at her *transformation*, Jessica is grateful for the cover of darkness. If Lorenzo were able to see her in the full light of day, he might ultimately reject her. Logical or not, Jessica gives voice to the same anxiety Stubbes expresses when he claims that women who cross-dress are capable of switching their sexes until they are little better than hermaphrodites.<sup>95</sup> According to the anxiety acknowledged by Stubbes, such women, such double-sexed people, cannot be trusted because they are constantly in disguise and therefore represent that which they are not: products of the heteronormative hegemony. "In a society that has an investment in seeing women as imperfect men," Orgel argues, "the danger points will be those at which women reveal that they have an independent essence, an existence that is not, in fact, under male control, a power and authority that either challenges male authority, or, more dangerously, that is not simply a version or parody of maleness, but is specifically female."<sup>96</sup> The woman who expresses her own agency in choosing an apparel outside of prescriptive sociosexual expectations is a woman who represents the danger of excessive sexuality and independence from the patriarchy.

Because Jessica does not cross-dress as a matured, masculine male (e.g. a soldier), she unwittingly participates within the hegemonic construct for "acceptable" homoeroticism. Jessica

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<sup>93</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, 2.4.29-39.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.6.34-39.

<sup>95</sup> Stubbes, 38.

<sup>96</sup> Orgel, *Impersonations*, 63.

is little more than a stand-in for a woman, according to this assumption, and is therefore the same type of lover as a woman would be. Jessica's embarrassment to be dressed out of accordance with what is socially expected for her sex lends credibility to the patriarchal ideology in the first place. As a woman, she *should* be ashamed to misrepresent her sex in this way. Portia stands diametrically opposed to Jessica: one woman feels the shame she ought while the other flaunts her dismissal of patriarchal boundaries in order to subvert the legal system.

*The Merchant of Venice* offers examples of women crossing sociosexual boundaries in terms of survival within the patriarchy: Jessica seeking to survive her escape from her father's tyranny, and Portia assisting Sebastian's survival from an unfortunate debtor's agreement.<sup>97</sup> Shakespeare does not limit female cross-dressing to terms of survival. In *Cymbeline*, Imogen cross-dresses in order to survive her journey, but her crossing has deeper consequences than simple survival or socioeconomical ones. Although at the outset Imogen is less reluctant to embrace her disguise than Jessica, and therefore does not balk at the idea Pisanio presents to her,<sup>98</sup> Imogen's interaction with her long-lost brothers is rife with sexual innuendo, lending energy to the social anxiety that men will find themselves attracted to "fair youths" who remind them of women. Guiderius welcomes Imogen with the following curious statement: "Were you a woman, youth, / I should woo hard but be your groom in honesty, / Ay, bid for you as I'd

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<sup>97</sup> Butler discusses cross-dressing (in terms of dressing against one's preferred gender expression) in terms of survival, as well: "When the norm appears at once to guarantee and threaten social survival (it is what you need to live; it is that which, if you live it, will threaten to efface you), then conforming and resisting become a compounded and paradoxical relation to the norm, a form of suffering and a potential site for politicization. The question of how to embody the norm is thus very often linked to the question of survival, of whether life itself will be possible. I think we should not underestimate what the thought of the possible does for those who experience survival itself as a burning issue" (*Undoing Gender* 217). Cross-dressing for the intersexed individual, for instance, can become a place of great anxiety under the auspice of survival within the hegemony. In order to avoid punishment or violence, the intersexed must dress (and behave) according to heteronormative prescriptions of dress (and behavior). Shakespeare's cross-dressing women, particularly in *Merchant*, exemplify for us moments when dressing along hegemonic lines could prove dangerous and counter to one's (or a loved one's) survival. In these instances, apparel becomes much more significant than merely choosing which article of clothing to wear on a particular day.

<sup>98</sup> *Cymbeline*, 3.4.144-185.

buy.”<sup>99</sup> There is simply no denying Guiderius’ sexual attraction toward his (unbeknownst to him) disguised sister. Imogen’s disguise presents a double-threat to proper sexual couplings: she is both Guiderius’ biological sister, and she is dressed to appear masculine. Although it is difficult to speculate whether Guiderius’ flirtation with his sister would have been identical regardless of her apparel, this encounter might suggest instead the incredible room for error that Imogen’s cross-dressing allows. Because she crosses social boundaries by representing herself as male, Imogen unwittingly invites sexual crossing as well; likewise, disguising herself so that her brothers may not recognize her as their sibling, she becomes an appealing sexual target. The warning in light of Imogen’s disguise seems clear: crossing socioeconomic boundaries of apparel means crossing sociosexual boundaries, as well.<sup>100</sup> When those boundaries are crossed, the fear seems to suggest a potential for transgressing other, more damning sexual boundaries as well (in this case, sibling incest).

Perhaps Imogen’s cross-dressing is less convincing than is Rosalind’s or Viola’s, but regardless Guiderius represents the man potentially called into “sinful” couplings with an effeminate youth.<sup>101</sup> Guiderius, however, is not a male seeking male affection; rather, he is masculinity personified seeking effeminacy personified.<sup>102</sup> Despite the object of Guiderius’ apparent desires, he demonstrates hegemonic heterosexual attractions. Imogen grows anxious at

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<sup>99</sup> *Cymbeline*, 3.6.66-68.

<sup>100</sup> Imogen’s dual socioeconomic and sociosexual crossing through her disguise should bring to mind Portia’s, as well. Because early English sumptuary codes were primarily interested in protecting the socioeconomic hierarchy, crossing economic boundaries often follows suit when a female character crosses sexual boundaries, particularly when she misrepresents her profession or her social status. As previously mentioned, however, crossing *down* (from an aristocratic attire to a servant’s attire, for instance) is not seen as dangerous as crossing *up*.

<sup>101</sup> It bears repeating here that this assumption is strictly heteronormative. Again, to suggest that masculine will always seek out feminine requires an unquestioning resolve to adhere to Menon’s so-called hetero-history. Focusing upon the difference, Guiderius’ masculinity seeks out the effeminacy of Imogen’s disguise. Despite his attraction appearing to suggest the potential for homoeroticism, this is a homoeroticism through the lens of heteronormativity. This interpretation leaves little to no room for the suggestion that homosexual attraction may not depend upon heteronormative definitions of masculinity or femininity.

<sup>102</sup> In other words, Guiderius is a man’s man who is deeply (and it would seem uncontrollably) attracted to femininity, whatever shape that femininity may take (whether in a female or a male body).

Guiderius' welcome and echoes instead the welcome offered her by Arviragus; he responds to his enthralled brother, "I'll make't my comfort / He is a man, I'll love him as my brother," and says to Imogen, "And such a welcome as I'd give to him / After long absence, such is yours."<sup>103</sup>

The juxtaposition of their welcomes likely causes a few laughs—Guiderius is spurred by his own sexuality (and perhaps this is the source of his deep passion that leads him to hastily behead Cloten),<sup>104</sup> while Arviragus relies upon custom and filial duty. Imogen clearly responds more comfortably to Arviragus, echoing him, "Mongst friends / If brothers."<sup>105</sup> Imogen's conflation of friends as brothers (or perhaps brothers as friends) implies that she will only feel safe (perhaps her chastity will not be called into question) if the men treat her as they would brothers. One might assume the specificity of the word "brothers" means that they would not be sexual conquests for one another; friendship itself is hardly enough of a sexual barrier to protect both Imogen's chastity and her disguise.<sup>106</sup>

Shakespeare provides a key moment to light on when attempting to craft an understanding of these seemingly inexplicable behaviors. We might be cautious, however, in our approach and not solely rely upon Shakespeare's interpretations of sumptuary codes and hetero-historical gender boundaries. Although our understandings of human sexualities, along with restrictive definitions for those sexualities, have progressed in terms of legal, social, moral, and religious implications, human sexuality has always already existed *as it is*. Believing, for instance, that all that is masculine will seek out feminine (or all that is feminine will seek out masculine) will lead to the stagnation of our study of human sexuality. The perceived potential for homosexuality in terms of gender expression is merely a comment on hegemonic beliefs of

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<sup>103</sup> *Cymbeline*, 3.6.68-9.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.2.119-124.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.6.72-3.

<sup>106</sup> According to Roger Warren's edition of *Cymbeline*, he suggests that this moment "...implies that she would feel safer if loved as brother. The sexual overtone of lines 66-69 is a potential threat to her disguise" (189n72-3).

the ways in which human sexuality and gender construction work. As regards homoerotic attractions between female characters, we might be led to believe that the women demonstrate signs of lesbian attraction. Even those interactions are based solely on heterosexual understandings of homoerotic interactions. Women like Olivia and Phebe seem only interested in the effeminacy of Cesario and Ganymede respectively because they still see the outer show of young masculinity. Further, the characters themselves are mere vehicles for deeper and more insidious claims to be made about the ways transvestites and transvestism can influence the sexualities of others. Seemingly heterosexual women (“normal” women, according to the hegemony) can be lured away from “normal” sexual attractions (to the opposite sex males who are pursuing them) simply because the female transvestite is the embodiment of female sexuality uncontrolled. Gender, as Butler has explained in *Gender Trouble*, has been and always will be performative in its nature; in fact, the performance itself is never truly “accurate” because there is no authentic sense of gender that is not always already informed by sociological terminology.

The lack of an “authentic” gender is evident in early modern dramas that rely upon the archetype of a cross-dressed character (especially one that is female). When actors are required to demonstrate, through the eyes of the cross-dressed character, the behavior of the opposite sex, the actor relies upon assumptions and expectations prescribed by social interactions. In *Undoing Gender*, Butler warns her readers against the temptation to seek out a “normal” gender; if gender is a “norm,” then:

the norm only persists as a norm to the extent that it is acted out in social practice and reidealized and reinstituted in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life. The norm has no independent ontological status, yet it cannot be easily reduced to its instantiations; it is itself (re)produced through its embodiment,

through the acts that strive to approximate it, through the idealizations reproduced in and by those acts.<sup>107</sup>

Gender remains complex and difficult to qualify simply because all qualifications rely upon the acknowledgement that the previously-held social terms and expectations are accurate and appropriate. Scholars, actors, the gendered audience member in general all must avoid the trap of either attempting to understand gender in strictly social terms or in biological terms. Gender relies upon both categories while also subverting them. Actors portray their gendered character (or their cross-dressed character's portrayal of the opposite gender or sex) while relying upon the social expectations of gendered behavior, but even this portrayal is a mere performance of something that is regularly performed. What Brecht described as the "alienation effect" in acting is truly an alienation device of attempting to understand one's own identity. In the pursuit for an "authentic" Self, one is shackled to terms already determined by social (and perhaps socioreligious) heteronormativity. As we perform the gender that we believe we actually embody, we can only do so according to the limitations already established by our social order.

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<sup>107</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 48.



## Chapter Four

### Master Mistress

If gender and sexuality are not necessarily linked, then there must be some other explanation for the early modern English hegemony's inclination to present the two as interchangeable concepts. The link, it seems, represents an ideality. An idealized hegemonic view of the genders would suggest that those who are masculine are also strictly physical males, while those who are feminine are also strictly physical females. Richard Mulcaster expands on this idea in his 1581 treatise *Positions*, wherein he explains that, particularly in the case of nature versus nurture, the upbringing of a specifically gendered child falls to the responsibility of the parents in order to align that gender with the child's physical nature (God-given, according to Mulcaster). He asserts: "...unto that good which he hath assigned them by such ways as he hath willed them, so that both by *nature*, the most obedient servant, and by the *Lord of nature*, our most bountiful God, we have it in commandment, not only to train up our own sex but also our female, seeing he hath to require an account for natural talents of both the parties, us for directing them, them for performance of our direction."<sup>1</sup> Through the physical "assignment" of sex (the physical sex that God has ordained for us), there exists a particular natural inclination toward a specific set of customary behaviors. Mulcaster does not believe that children should be left completely to their own devices, however; their guardians must guide those natural inclinations in order to ensure that they continue on course toward God's plan for that child's

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Mulcaster, *Positions*, 131. Emphasis original.

specific sex. In this way, then, “natural” and “nature” are not always at odds with religious upbringing—a natural inclination toward femininity in women and masculinity in men works alongside the nurturing requirements of a Christian upbringing in order to obey God’s commandments. In spite of a natural inclination toward a specific gender, Mulcaster does acknowledge a level of performativity (although he couches his theory in terms of training rather than in what Butler will later regard as a performance).

When “training” a female child, Mulcaster examines socioeconomic statuses in order to determine precisely how her femininity should be demonstrated.<sup>2</sup> He believes that all female children should receive some amount of training but that this training (education in particular) should be determined in consideration to her socioeconomic status; in other words, she should be trained according to that which will be most beneficial to her as a grown woman. Mulcaster goes so far as to defend the education of girls, even suggesting that parents should allow their daughters to receive a similar upbringing as their sons: developing physical strength, learning to read and write, and sharpening their wit. He does concede, however, that a girl’s natural weakness (both physical and mental) will ultimately keep her from overstepping gender boundaries, as long as she is likewise trained by her parents to recognize those boundaries and remain within them.<sup>3</sup> In this way, gender is *demonstrated*, *taught*, and *nurtured* by a capable tutor (one who not only understands heteronormative customs but who also has the ability to discipline behavior out of line with those customs), and it is simultaneously *mimicked* by the pupil who replicates the socially prescribed appropriate behavior demonstrated by the tutor.

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<sup>2</sup> Mulcaster explains: “If a young *maiden* be to be trained in respect of marriage, obedience to her head, and the qualities which look that way, must needs be her best way. If in regard of necessity to learn how to live, artificial training must furnish out her trade. If in respect of ornament to beautify her birth, and to honor her place, rareties in that kind, and seemly for that kind, do best beseem such. If for government, not denied them by God and devised them by men, the greatness of their calling doth call for great gifts and general excellencies for general occurrences. Wherefore having these different ends always in eye, we may point them their training in different degrees” (134).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-136.

In the case of early modern cross-dressers, as I will examine in this chapter with Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Love's Cure*, gender expression exercises the very essence of its performative nature. The cross-dresser is likely not only aware of the hegemonic expectations placed upon him or her in regard to the socially-accepted performance of a "natural" gender, but the cross-dresser also attempts to mimic the normative expectations for the performance of the "opposite" gender. Observers of the cross-dresser are moved to witness the "true" nature of gender: that there is no original masculinity or femininity. The cross-dresser mimics according to social custom and norms, and not always from a drive to find a "natural" gender with which he or she comfortably identifies. In the case of modern-day drag queens, Butler points out that the performance of the cross-dresser, "...plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. [...] *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.*"<sup>4</sup> The contingency for this performance of gender in the face of hegemonic expectations is that it requires us to reconsider the relationship between sex and gender: "...we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity."<sup>5</sup> The very practice of cross-dressing challenges heteronormative assumptions of gender expression; in fact, if these expressions were truly naturally ingrained, then why should parents receive instruction on how to nurture those natural inclinations? If gender expression and physical sex were naturally linked, then masculinity and femininity would not need to be taught. Mimicry as well as educational texts such as that of Mulcaster stand in direct (if unintentional) opposition to the early modern

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<sup>4</sup> Butler, 187. Emphasis original.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 188.

hegemonic assumption that physical sex, gender, and sexual attraction are at all linked or “naturally” dictated.

### Masked Masculinities: the roaring girl

Dekker and Middleton explore the depths of the discourse on “natural” physical sex, gender, and sexual attraction through their representation of the historical Mary Frith in *The Roaring Girl*. Although the personal history of Moll’s namesake is the stuff of fantastic legend, Moll Cutpurse herself is an unapologetic, fully female, fully masculine cross-dresser. Her social transgressions go beyond her clothing choices, however, and stir up controversial rumors regarding the very nature of what lies beneath those trousers as well as speculation over who arouses her. As she is first described, Sir Alexander describes her as a “scurvy woman,” a mockery to “the sex of woman.” In fact, he goes so far as to imagine her development while still in her mother’s womb: “...her birth began / Ere she was all made. ’Tis woman more than man, / Man more than woman, and—which to none can hap— / The sun gives her two shadows to one shape....”<sup>6</sup> Moll, in Sir Alexander’s estimation, is little more than one of the monsters under investigation in Paré’s *On Monsters and Marvels*. Because she was born prematurely to the completed development of her external genitalia (so Sir Alexander imagines), Moll is a hermaphrodite in the most obvious way: she is both man and woman. In the cases of these individuals born with both genitalia, as discussed in Chapter Two’s investigation of Montaigne’s and Paré’s works, hermaphrodites were traditionally given the opportunity to *choose* their socially-approved heteronormative sexual identity; but once that decision had been made, they were restricted both from pursuing others of the same physical sex and from changing their

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<sup>6</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 1.2.125, 128, 129-132.

decision to be male or female. According to Sir Alexander, Moll's willingness to cross gender boundaries in her apparel likens her in many regards to those who are naturally born hermaphrodites. As a classified "roaring girl," Moll's body draws great amounts of sexual attention. Jean Howard suggests that:

...the openness of her body is prefigured in the play's very title. A roaring girl, a version of the more common stage type, the roaring boy, is a woman given to copious, quarrelsome speech. To *be* a roaring girl is to have one's mouth open. Moll does, for a great deal of the play; and sometimes when it is open she is quarrelling and sometimes canting and sometimes just talking. And, of course, any woman whose mouth is opened in public spaces, in particular, is read as whorish, as incontinent with other bodily orifices as much as with the mouth.<sup>7</sup>

As an unfinished woman whose "birth began / Ere she was all made" Moll's physical body is monstrous and possibly gaping; the image is horrific. Sir Alexander believes Moll's preference in apparel centers entirely upon her inability to choose the proper sex because her "proper" sex is not fully determined. Perhaps her orifices, as Howard suggests, were left gaping open at her birth after they were unable to finish forming properly. This hermaphroditic, monstrous version of Moll is difficult to qualify as either male or female, fully human or incomplete. She is certainly far from "normal" according to Sir Alexander's definition, which leaves Moll both uncategorized and untrustworthy.<sup>8</sup>

Her inability to choose sexual sides because of her physical "deformity" appears to be common knowledge among her neighbors as well; Laxton accuses Moll of even experiencing sexual arousal with both men and women. He gossips with Goshawk and Mistress Gallipot:

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<sup>7</sup> Howard, "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotics of *The Roaring Girl*," 181.

<sup>8</sup> Sir Alexander even goes so far as to call Moll "a varlet" and "a naughty pack" (*The Roaring Girl*, 1.2.135, 137).

“...she might first cuckold the husband and then make him to as much for the wife!”<sup>9</sup> In his earlier speech, Laxton acknowledges the additional danger Moll represents to the social stratosphere: Moll is capable of interacting with both upper and lower class individuals, the aristocrats as well as the merchants. According to Laxton’s observations “[s]he slips from one company to another like a fat eel between a Dutchman’s fingers....”<sup>10</sup> Just as Moll seems to exist in the space between the male and the female, she exists in the social spaces between hierarchical categories. Orgel argues that “...she serves essentially as an interpreter of that world to the middle-class world of the drama; she is an honourable, chaste, sentimental peacemaker, who does not take purses, but recovers them.”<sup>11</sup> Moll keeps a foot in each world, demonstrating (to Laxton’s horror) a common ground between otherwise socially differentiated statuses. She is dangerous because she does not have a socially prescribed *place* to exist; Laxton finds her both alluring and untrustworthy (he decides to stand apart and observe her for awhile) because of her slipperiness.

In addition to an inability to trust her, Laxton finds Moll sexually arousing—he desires her the way a whore might be desired by a deranged client. Laxton does not simply want to pay Moll for sex; instead, he imagines specific scenarios where men could sleep with Moll apparently without rest because of her “slippery” nature. Ruminating on her supposed sexual promiscuity, Laxton tells himself:

Heart, I would give but too much money to be  
nibbling with that wench. Life, sh’has the spirit of four

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<sup>9</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 2.1.211-212.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.1.206-207.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Orgel, “The Subtext of *The Roaring Girl*,” 22.

great parishes, and a voice that will drown all the city!  
Methinks a brave captain might get all his soldiers upon  
her, and ne'er be beholding to a company of Mile End  
milksops, if he could come on and come off quickly enough.  
Such a Moll were a marrowbone before an Italian: he  
would cry bona-roba till his ribs were nothing but bone.  
I'll lay hard siege to her—money is that *aquafortis* that eats  
into many a maidenhead: where the walls are flesh and  
blood, I'll ever pierce through with a golden auger.<sup>12</sup>

To Laxton, most virgins are easily bought; the images of money eating into the maidenhead and of himself piercing through flesh and blood walls with a golden phallus are particularly evocative of commercialized sex. Laxton presupposes that, because she is a woman who defies social convention in her apparel, Moll must “naturally” also be a woman whose morals are easily paid off in order to fulfill sexual gratification. Laxton even fantasizes a scenario that keeps Moll as a sexual tool indefinitely, as in the case of the imagined military captain who is able to fulfill his need for soldiers simply by having Moll provide them, as long as the captain is able to remove himself from her quickly enough for her to give birth. Laxton’s reverie is excessive; not only is Moll a promiscuous woman (determined by her apparel), but she is also merely a sexual object to be used for any other purpose besides her own sexual satisfaction.

When society struggles to categorize an individual, then that individual is neither easily understood nor immediately stratified according to socioeconomic and sociosexual boundaries. Laxton imagines a bi-sexuality in Moll where she would first seduce the wife before turning her

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<sup>12</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 2.1.187-197.

attentions to the husband; in this understanding of a potentially hermaphroditic Moll (and of the cross-dressed masculine woman), there is little room for any other type of sexuality, such as homosexual couplings with either the wife or the husband.<sup>13</sup> In a scenario where heteronormativity wins out, Moll is both man and woman by the simple virtue of her willingness to wear masculine clothing. Laxton's inability or unwillingness to imagine a woman who exists independently of the sexual needs of her male companions reveals his own misogyny, which Moll seems herself greatly concerned with rooting out of English society. Jennifer Low suggests that the majority of Moll's exasperation with English misogyny rests with the gossipy nature of *men*: "...gossip feeds on falsehood. To trust it is to be deceived; to spread it is to be a liar. Gossip is particularly pernicious because it seems not to originate with any single person and therefore cannot be stopped. But Moll warns her acquaintances not to trust gossips, which wrongs more people than it characterizes truly."<sup>14</sup> Moll suggests an alternate method to responding to the gossip of others—to ignore it: "...I please myself, and care not else who loves me."<sup>15</sup>

Although Moll claims to operate above gossip and with little concern for other people's opinions of her, she does not have much patience for gossiping in general or for the conclusions

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<sup>13</sup> In fact, we could take this argument so far as to suggest that Laxton might imagine in this scenario that the supposed hermaphroditic Moll would use only her male genitalia to couple with the wife while she would use only her female genitalia with the husband. In Paré's discussion on the correction of hermaphrodites, he describes a scenario in which the hermaphroditic individual would be given the opportunity to find either a man or a woman (non-hermaphroditic, presumably) sexually arousing. The presumption of this experiment exists strictly within a binary relationship to sexual arousal—male and female are only attracted to each other. A hermaphrodite who experiences an erection at the sight of a woman would be determined male, and subsequently that male would be forbidden from using his vagina in sexual interactions. The opposite is true for those hermaphrodites determined to be female. We might presume that any physical sign of sexual arousal would result in a heteronormative assignment. If this is the understanding of hermaphroditism and human sexuality in early modern England that Dekker and Middleton would have called to mind through this gossipy exchange, then modern readers of the play might have greater evidence to suggest a strictly dichotomous view of human sex and sexuality: there are only two sexes (male and female), two genders (masculine and feminine), and two sexualities which are really the same sexuality (male is aroused by female, and female is aroused by male). Other possibilities are against "nature," but more to the point they are socially subversive and exist in the dangerous spaces in between categories.

<sup>14</sup> Jennifer Low, "'Women are Wordes, Men are Deedes': Female Duelists in the Drama," 287.

<sup>15</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 5.2.349.



to which Laxton encourages Goshawk and Mistress Gallipot to jump.<sup>16</sup> Confronting Laxton directly, Moll chastises Laxton for his unrelenting misogyny: "...thou'rt one of those / That thinks each woman thy fond flexible whore; / If she but cast a liberal eye upon thee..."<sup>17</sup> Moll whittles down Laxton's behavior toward women in terms of sex: just because a woman makes eye contact with him, he assumes that she desires him. "Moll strongly condemns men who assume that a friendly woman is a loose one," Low argues. "She criticizes men who make their reputations by telling other men about fictional conquests of real women."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps Laxton's initial claim against Moll as a woman willing to cuckold both a husband and his wife could be culturally understandable—if transvestism were seen as an arousing taboo, then Moll's appearance cannot help but be sexualized. Stephen Orgel argues that, "...the excitement is intimately related to the crossing of gender boundaries. [...] Masculine dress is conceived...as empowering and liberating; it frees its wearers, however, not to be like men, but to be sexually active women—harlots."<sup>19</sup> Because men have mostly unquestioned sexual freedom (so far as it extends to heteronormative partnerships), women who express a desire to mimic this same freedom are given a slanderous nickname: "harlot." They are marginalized by point of fact that they desire just as much as men desire, and women's desires are even similar to men's. In the early modern English patriarchy, this sameness between men and women's sexuality (presumably *heterosexuality*) is alarming—women and men are meant to be classified based upon distinct *differences*. A woman who is not only aware of her sexual desires but who also

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<sup>16</sup> In response to Laxton's classification of Moll as a fat eel slipping between a Dutchman's fingers, Mistress Gallipot claims, "Some will not stick to say she's a man, and some, both man and woman" (2.1.209-210). Taking the bait already established by Laxton, Mistress Gallipot makes an unexpected connection between sexual proclivities and choices in apparel when she states that some people are confused by which sex she is (while still referring to Moll with feminine pronouns herself).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.1.72-74.

<sup>18</sup> Low, 287.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Orgel, "The Subtext of *The Roaring Girl*," p. 18.

actively pursues them threatens a patriarchy that attempts to convince its women that they *should* only receive their sexuality at the hands of benevolent men (preferably in the form of marriage).<sup>20</sup> Under this concept, female sexuality is a gift either bestowed upon women of proper upbringing who have obeyed their patriarchal requirements of chastity, or it is a sinful temptation taken forcibly by a masculine woman who has no consideration for patriarchy's well-meaning guidance. According to Laxton's gossip, Moll's choice in apparel reveals not only her preference in sexual partners but also her awareness that, in spite of her unmarried status, she has sexual desires *at all*.<sup>21</sup>

Intending to act upon the fantasy he crafts, Laxton approaches Moll and offers ten gold pieces for sexual services, telling her, "...you see I do not trifle with you—do but say thou wilt meet me, and I'll have a coach ready for thee."<sup>22</sup> Moll plays along and offers her hand as a sign that she accepts his payment; this thrills Laxton, who exclaims, "O good gold!"<sup>23</sup> Laxton, now proven to be correct in his estimation of women's willingness to turn to prostitution, happily

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<sup>20</sup> Although this anxiety may seem absurd to modern readers, we must acknowledge that women's fashion has not yet been released from the oppressive and suppressive connection with sexuality. Women whose hemlines are shorter than a particular point on the body, or whose collars dip lower than another point on the body, are immediately (and often unfairly) categorized in terms of sexuality. A girl who shows "too much" leg or cleavage might be slut-shamed, while a woman who shows none might be considered prudish. While female transvestism is these days tied closer to a woman's choice in sexual partners (a woman who dresses specifically in men's fashion might be categorized as a lesbian, despite her true orientation), apparel and sexual promiscuity are no further separated than they were in the early modern period. This concept is discussed further in the concluding chapter.

<sup>21</sup> Orgel goes further to argue: "The idea that being a harlot constitutes masculine behavior is no doubt paradoxical, but it shows precisely how much anxieties about women's sexuality, in this or any other period, are a projection of male sexual fantasies—being masculine meaning, in this context, being able to have constant and promiscuous sex. In the same way, Mary Frith's masculine attire was felt to be lewd and lascivious; and what was lewd and lascivious about it was precisely the provocation it offered the masculine libido" (18). In way, the fault lies with Mary's / Moll's peers—are these men so incapable of controlling their own sexual response that they must govern and restrict female attire so that it is not provocative? This justification of suppressive sumptuary codes calls to mind the modern misogynistic attitude toward female victims of sexual crimes. Modern misogynists have been known to suggest that if a woman had not been "asking for it" in her attire (presumably by wearing clothing that was far too provocative for her attacker to handle), then she would not have been victimized in the first place. This sort of attitude toward women's clothing in relation to men's inability to control their own libidos succeeds only in shaming and silencing victims of sexual crimes.

<sup>22</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 2.1.288-289.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.1.291.

arranges a time to meet Moll in order to satisfy his sexual desires. When they meet again, Moll has quite a different demeanor, even confusing Laxton with her masculine apparel.<sup>24</sup> Moll quickly pulls her sword on him as consequence for his gossip and lewd sexual innuendoes toward her.

Deeply offended and angered by Laxton's assumptions about her chastity, Moll launches into a long speech:

How many of our sex by such as thou  
Have their good thoughts paid with a blasted name  
That never deserved loosely or did trip  
In path of whoredom beyond cup and lip?  
But for the stain of conscience and of soul,  
Better had women fall into the hands  
Of an act silent than a bragging nothing:  
There's no mercy in't. —What durst move you, sir,  
To think of me whorish? —A name which I'd tear out  
From the high German's throat if it lay ledger there  
To dispatch privy slanders against me!  
In thee I defy all men, their worst hates  
And their best flatteries, all their golden witchcrafts  
With which they entangle the poor spirits of fools:

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<sup>24</sup> As Laxton attempts to find Moll according to the items she ordered from the merchants earlier ("a shag ruff, a frieze jerkin, a short sword, and a safeguard," 3.1.34-35), Moll enters dressed as a man. She approaches him, but he does not recognize her. "I thought you mistook me, sir," Laxton says to her. "You seem to be some young barrister; / I have no suit in law—all my land's sold..." Moll asks for the coach to take them to their destination, and Laxton finally seems to recognize her. "Who's this? —Moll? Honest Moll?" She chastises Laxton: "So young, and purblind? You're an old wanton in your eyes, I see that" (3.1.48-50, 53-55).

Distressèd needlewomen and trade-fallen wives—  
 Fish that must needs bite, or themselves be bitten—  
 Such hungry things as these may soon be took  
 With a worm fastened on a golden hook:  
 Those are the lecher's food, his prey. He watches  
 For quarrelling wedlocks and poor shifting sisters:  
 'Tis the best fish he takes. But why, good fisherman,  
 Am I thought meat for you, that never yet  
 Had angling rod cast towards me?— 'Cause you'll say  
 I'm given to sport, I'm often merry, jest;  
 Had mirth no kindred in the world but lust?  
 O shame take all her friends then! But howe'er  
 Thou and the baser world censure my life,  
 I'll send 'em word by thee, and write so much  
 Upon thy breast, 'cause thou shalt bear't in mind:  
 Tell them 'twere base to yield where I have conquered.  
 I scorn to prostitute myself to a man,  
 I that can prostitute a man to me!—  
 And so I greet thee.<sup>25</sup>

Moll, so frequently the subject of the townspeople's gossip because of her unconventional apparel and behavior, plays both the victim and the defender of the victimized. Moll takes up for

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<sup>25</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 3.1.81-113. Directly after this speech, Moll exclaims that she wishes Laxton could represent all of those who have slandered her in the past: "That I might vex an army at one time!" (3.1.115). This statement acknowledges Moll's awareness of her reputation, as well as the reality that Laxton is not the only one of peers who questions her chastity and morals simply because of her apparel.

femininity against the misogynistic patriarchy that refuses to protect women from slander, pointing out that “for women...gossip is particularly harmful because rumors of unchastity may ruin a woman’s life.”<sup>26</sup> A woman slandered not only faces the scrutiny of her peers but also, as Laxton’s gossip risks, the dissolution of otherwise trusting bonds between other women. Laxton merely speculates in his gossip with Goshawk and Mistress Gallipot that Moll “*might*” seduce both the husband and the wife in an attempt to play both the female and male sexual role. If Moll truly were to behave in this way, if Laxton’s slander were not actually slanderous but merely a word of warning, then Moll’s relationships with her peers could easily dissolve. The dissolution of these bonds between her peers has the potential to cast Moll even further out from the cocoon of heteronormativity; she is redeemed only when she defends the institution of marriage, insofar as that institution involves other people.

When considering her own thoughts on marrying, Moll reveals she has no interest in participating because “I love to lie o’ both sides o’ th’ bed myself and again o’ th’ other side....”<sup>27</sup> Moll enjoys playing both female and male roles; she is not interested in marrying into a heteronormative, limiting category where she will be restricted from performing one of the two genders she enjoys embodying. In a way, Laxton’s typical patriarchal misogyny here is reasonable—Moll indeed *would* question and likely violate socially prescribed notions of the husband’s and wife’s marital roles. Jonathan Dollimore reminds us that “...the sexual comes to possess enormous signifying power.”<sup>28</sup> In a society that predetermines sexual roles and that conflates sexuality with social customs, a transvestite woman represents a dangerous anomaly that refuses to accept categorization and who very well could upend the expected gender roles

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<sup>26</sup> Low, 287.

<sup>27</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 2.2.36-37.

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 67.

placed upon her. Recognizing her unwillingness to play the submissive wifely role for the simple fact that she is a physical female, Moll voluntarily removes herself from consideration as a marriageable partner. This voluntary elimination ultimately upholds the hegemonic belief in a particular sanctity in marriage—because she cannot submit to its strict requirements, Moll respectfully declines to participate.

In spite of her attempt to shirk the slander that accompanies Laxton's gossip, Moll does in fact represent a threat to the patriarchy. Dollimore points out that James I retaliated against this threat from female transvestites in 1620 because, "he, like many others at that time, felt female transvestites were usurping male authority."<sup>29</sup> Stephen Orgel adds: "this admonition was directed against the masculine fashion of women's clothing, and it is to the point that the king had to be content with a moral injunction. It was not illegal for women to dress as men; sumptuary legislation concerned itself with violations of class, not violations of gender."<sup>30</sup> The trouble with Moll's style of dress is not that she is necessarily attempting to *become* a man in terms of gender construction; rather, she represents a dangerous possibility for women who cross socioeconomic boundaries that happen to be drawn on gender lines. Males have authority over females because they are males, and the sumptuary codes were established in order to maintain that distinct authority between the sexes as well as between the classes. Although there were certainly males who were of lower social classes than some females (for instance, English males were below the queen's authority), within individual socioeconomic brackets gender boundaries would have clarified hierarchical rank between members of the same social class. Moll mocks Laxton before beating him up, physically usurping his own masculinity. As a female transvestite, Moll clearly understands the gender role she is socially expected to play as well as

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<sup>29</sup> Dollimore, 67.

<sup>30</sup> Orgel, "The Subtext of *The Roaring Girl*," 14.

the one she would *prefer* to play. Moll's comprehension of social gender prescription is evident in her very argument against marriage: "...a wife, you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey, therefore I'll ne'er go about it."<sup>31</sup> According to Moll's interpretation of patriarchal expectations for wives, her unwillingness to obey and submit to her husband would immediately remove her from the category of marriageable women.

In a way, Moll supports the patriarchy's definition for a wife—she acknowledges that a wife “*ought* to be obedient.”<sup>32</sup> Dollimore suggests that Moll's figure in the play represents a “partial critique of patriarchal law, sexual exploitation, and aristocratic culture.”<sup>33</sup> Far from arguing entirely against all things the patriarchy supports, Moll chooses primarily to criticize sumptuary codes while supporting at least some of the gender codes of conduct. In fact, perhaps her opting out of the institution of marriage entirely represents a respectful support of the patriarchy rather than a wholesale subversion of its clearly defined gender roles. Because Moll is incapable of existing within the strict confines of marriage as prescribed by the English patriarchy, she will voluntarily remove herself from eligibility. Therefore, as Moll demonstrates, the female transvestite might not always subvert but she could in fact *support* the patriarchy. If a marriage by these early modern terms would have been an ideal combination of strengths and weaknesses (masculinity and femininity, respectively), then there are no real companions whose gender would suit Moll because she herself is already a perfect combination of femininity and masculinity. Moll feels that she is too strong to need to be strengthened by a man, and in fact she

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<sup>31</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 2.2.37-40.

<sup>32</sup> Her use of “ought” here is loaded with implication. An ideal wife will be obedient (to her husband, her father, her king, etc.), but Moll does not offer much additional clarity for the definition of “obedience” in the Jacobean patriarchy. One might assume (using general knowledge of early modern patriarchy) that a wife's obedience would have been narrowly defined to mean that she would in all ways agree with her husband and comply with his commands. Perhaps it is against this narrow definition that Moll bucks—if obedience is a strict and constant compliance with absolutely no opportunity for individual decision-making, then it becomes obvious why Moll would have little interest in the institution of marriage.

<sup>33</sup> Dollimore, 71.

believes she could be stronger than some biological males, as well. Orgel points out that, “Moll is surrounded by men who are less than men; the play is full of references to impotence, castration, false phalluses, counter-tenors.... If these are the men who admire and fear Moll, what is she to a ‘real’ man, a man who is as fully able and willing to play the man’s role as she is?”<sup>34</sup> She does not require a husband to improve upon her feminine weaknesses: “I have the head now of myself, and am man enough for a woman: marriage is but a chopping and changing, where a maiden loses one head, and has a worse i’th’place.”<sup>35</sup> In Moll’s estimation, entering into marriage and losing her “maidenhead” to replace it with a man’s head is a pitiful exchange. As a single woman, Moll is herself the “head”—she alone makes and acts upon decisions independently of direct male influence. Marriage also brings with it the loss of female virginity, the maidenhead, and through sexual intercourse the hymen is replaced with the penis. Neither of these exchanges is valuable enough for Moll to willingly submit herself to the rule of a man.

Just as Moll supports the patriarchy when she volunteers an abstinence from marriage herself, she reaffirms her support of hegemonic views on marriage when she actively works in favor of Sebastian and Mary Fitzallard’s marriage. As Christian Billing points out, “[a]lthough Moll Cutpurse appears on the surface to articulate an alternative *telos* to companionate marriage and rejects the female subjugation it entailed, if one scratches away at the surface of the play, one begins to see the notion of ‘proto-feminism’ rapidly disintegrating.”<sup>36</sup> While Moll routinely mocks weaker men for their weakness, she does so in a manner that still upholds patriarchal heteronormativity—Moll’s frustration with effeminate or weak men pivots upon the fact that she herself is *likewise* capable of masculinity. “She criticizes men for not being ‘man’ enough; she

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<sup>34</sup> Orgel, “The Subtext of *The Roaring Girl*,” 24.

<sup>35</sup> *The Roaring Girl*, 2.2.42-45.

<sup>36</sup> Billing, *Masculinity, Corporality and the English Stage 1580-1635*, 145.



attacks unmanly men and braggarts (men who lack the ‘stones’ appropriate to their sex),” Billing argues. “Her complete lack of interest in aligning herself with characters of her own biological sex, and her desire to act instead as a paradigm of assertive and aggressive masculinity overblown enough to shame men into following through with their own phallic posturing reveals just how counterproductive Moll’s character actually is from a feminist perspective.”<sup>37</sup> Moll is not the ideal example of values for female agency and empowerment; she instead supports patriarchal heteronormativity and even seems to believe that Galenic thought in regards to the perfection of the masculine is correct. As Orgel suggests, “...the feminine here, in a particularly clear way, is constructed out of the masculine. [...] Acting like a man is clearly better than acting like a woman, both more attractive—and the point is worth stressing—more likely to lead to an honourable and happy marriage. More than this, it is, in an important sense, a crucial element in acting like a woman.”<sup>38</sup> If the early modern understanding of the “feminine” is constructed out of an understanding of the “masculine,” then Moll’s masculine apparel acknowledges the presumed inherent perfection in the masculine. Men represent authority both in social terms as well as in sexual terms; women merely receive behavioral cues from the male authorities who govern them.<sup>39</sup> There is perfection in the masculine, but Moll has no patience for men who are uninterested or incapable of pursuing that perfection. She expects that a man

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<sup>37</sup> Billing, 149.

<sup>38</sup> Orgel, “The Subtext of *The Roaring Girl*,” 21, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Just as femininity is constructed from masculinity, it is worth acknowledging that the concept of homosexuality (as Laxton’s gossip suggests of Moll’s sexual preferences) is likewise interpreted and categorized in terms of *heterosexuality*. The feminine is in opposition to the masculine; homosexuality likewise exists in opposition to heterosexuality. Perhaps, however, these concepts are not as distinctly clear as they seem. In order to accept that femininity is the opposite of masculinity and that homosexuality is the opposite of heterosexuality, one must first accept that masculinity and heterosexuality are the norm, the baseline, by which all other genders and sexualities can be compared. If we look at gender construction and sexual identity in terms of existing on a continuum that is not precisely fixed, then we might come closer to understanding what differences (if any) truly do exist between the genders and sexualities.

should be the bold, gallant, strong, macho epitome of masculinity; a man should be *at least* as masculine as Moll.

Her concern with marriage, as far as Moll considers it in her specific situation, rests on the inherent reciprocity and complement of the masculine and feminine. Where the feminine is weak, the masculine dominates; where the masculine is overly hardened, the feminine softens. As a representation of both masculinity and femininity, Moll does not require a masculine presence in her life to supplement any lack. Her perfection in femininity derives from her vow of chastity—despite her association with the presumably licentious roaring boys, Moll does not intend to embody the sexual promiscuity that *may* go along with bachelorhood. Billing points out that “Dekker and Middleton seem at pains to demonstrate that connections between cross-dressing and sexual impropriety are erroneous; they create a character who ostensibly remains chaste and is, perhaps, a virgin.”<sup>40</sup> This chastity protects Moll’s femininity, her maidenhead, and confirms that she is indeed a virtuous woman in spite of her choice of apparel.<sup>41</sup> In this way, Dekker and Middleton buck against views that would suggest a connection between clothing and sexuality; they use Moll’s transgression in order to underscore the idea that clothing is not enough of an indicator to use in order to judge an individual’s sexual behavior. In fact, Orgel points out that Moll “...is, indeed, with the exception of Mary Fitzallard, the only unquestionably virtuous woman in the play.”<sup>42</sup> In addition to her own chastity, Moll upholds the institute of marriage as an appropriate option for the right pair of lovers: particularly, Sebastian and Mary Fitzallard. Jean Howard argues that, “...Moll’s cross-dressing objectifies disorder in order to put it to rights. We therefore find her intervening in the Wengrave plot on the side of the young

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<sup>40</sup> Billing, 142.

<sup>41</sup> Likewise, her chastity restores the reputation that Laxton attempts to destroy—if she refuses to engage in sexual intercourse with any partner, then she engage in the level of promiscuity that Laxton imagines.

<sup>42</sup> Orgel, “The Subtext of *The Roaring Girl*,” 24.

lovers, since the father's attempts to block that marriage are unnatural and unjust."<sup>43</sup> Moll is not the clear threat to patriarchal order that she otherwise appears to be by the merchant-class characters who gossip about her. Instead, she is the chaos that restores "natural" order so that distinctions between the sexes can be made clear. Howard explains that, "one thing Moll's representation foregrounds is the tension that exists in this text between the pressure of urgent female sexual desire and a patriarchal culture in which women's sexuality is in theory subject to masculine control and regulation."<sup>44</sup> While her cross-dressing appears to be overtly subversive and in direct conflict with sumptuary codes, Moll's behavior does not always support what she appears to be—she is both the lightning rod and the restorer. She attracts criticism and mockery while simultaneously and actively pursuing *order*.

### Custom Cured by Love

In dramas such as *Love's Cure* and *The Roaring Girl*, cross-dressing is a behavior that is ridiculed and, sometimes, *cured*. Siblings Clara and Lucio of *Love's Cure* are raised by their opposite-sex parents while Don Alvarez (their father) is exiled. While the siblings are separated, they are raised according to the gender expression of the single parent raising them—Clara dresses, behaves, and recognizes herself as a boy, while the opposite is true for her brother Lucio, who is raised by his mother Eugenia.<sup>45</sup> Upon his return, Alvarez instructs Clara that she must "forget" her male name (Lucio), for they are to be reunited with their estranged family members:

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<sup>43</sup> Howard, "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotics of *The Roaring Girl*," 179.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-4.

<sup>45</sup> The decision for the opposite sex parent to raise the children was not made in terms of experimentation. Eugenia was pregnant with Lucio at the time of Alvarez's exile; his taking Clara away from her mother is not clearly explained in the play, but when he does take her, he disguises her as a male and calls her Lucio. The real Lucio, having never met his father until his return at the beginning of *Love's Cure* was called Posthumina by Eugenia.

My lov'd Clara  
(For Lucio is a name thou must forget  
With Lucio's bold behaviour) though thy breeding  
I'th' camp may plead something in the excuse  
Of thy rough manners, custome having chang'd,  
Though not thy Sex, the softness of thy nature,  
And fortune (then a cruell stepdame to thee)  
Impos'd upon thy tender sweetnesse, burthens  
Of hunger, cold, wounds, want, such as would crack  
The sinews of a man not borne a Souldier....<sup>46</sup>

Alvarez reveals his deepest concern with having raised his daughter as a boy: through custom, the expression of her gender has become hardened; however, he does not fear that she has undergone any sort of physical transformation in her sex. To Alvarez, Clara has always been biologically female, but out of the necessity to survive among soldiers she has been raised to perform according to social expectations of masculine gender expression. Alvarez's fear, then, localizes on whether or not she has been ruined as a woman who behaves like a man (not unlike Moll who is otherwise "ruined" for the institution of marriage); he hopes that Clara will be able to easily revert to her "natural" feminine state.

Clara responds to her father's speech as a dutiful child of the period would to a respected parent: "Sir, I know only that / It stands not with my duty to gaine-say you, / In any thing: I must, and will put on / What fashion you think best: though I could wish / I were what I appeare."<sup>47</sup>

Understanding her social role as a child submissive to a parent, she does not disobey her father's

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<sup>46</sup> *Love's Cure*, 1.3.17-26.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.3.34-38.

wishes that she “forget” her masculine upbringing. Clara does, however, reflect that, although she will obey her father, she does wish that she could continue to behave according to her appearance; in other words, as she is dressed as a young man, she wishes she could continue to behave in a masculine manner. Alvarez replies, “Endeavour rather / To be what you are, Clara, entering here / As you were borne, a woman.”<sup>48</sup> While Clara would prefer to continue behaving according to custom (her upbringing), Alvarez believes that she should be capable of relying upon her female nature in order to know how to behave as a woman. Jennifer Low argues:

Clara causes gender confusion entirely different from that of Middleton and Dekker’s Moll. Though Moll is described as a monster, she is supposed to be easily recognized as a woman character. Moll fashionably combines men’s and women’s clothing (like the women at whom *Hic Mulier* is aimed). Clara’s disguise is meant to be complete: she effectively impersonates a man. Unlike Moll, Clara has no wish to confuse others by dressing or acting anomalously; with her father’s endorsement, she has dressed and acted as a man for sixteen years.<sup>49</sup>

In asking Clara to be what she *is* naturally, Alvarez unwittingly asks his daughter to deceive others. She was previously permitted to behave according to the gender she believed came naturally to her; dressed as a woman, forced to embrace femininity, Clara faces a future wherein she will necessarily confuse others (as well as herself) about her true and natural gender identity. Already Alvarez indicates to his daughter that there is no need for instruction on how to perform one’s socially-prescribed, heteronormative gender. Alvarez does not seem to believe that femininity is a *learned* or *mimed* behavior; instead, it should be innate. As a woman, femininity should come easily to her; Clara does not find it easy to cast away her sword, however. It is not

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<sup>48</sup> *Love’s Cure*, 1.3.38-40.

<sup>49</sup> Low, 289-290.

until Clara falls in love with a man that she fully embraces her femininity, particularly as a submissive member of the patriarchy.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, Eugenia prepares Lucio for his reunion with Alvarez and Clara, indicating that she, too, believes he should have little trouble embracing masculinity, particularly with his father as a guide:

No more Posthumina now, thou hast a Father,  
A Father living to take off that name,  
Which my too credulous fears, that he was dead,  
Bestow'd upon thee; thou shalt see him Lucio,  
And make him young again, by seeing thee  
Who only hadst a being in my Womb  
When he went from me Lucio.  
[...]  
Thou shalt appear  
To be such as I brought thee forth: a man,  
This womanish disguise, in which I have  
So long conceal'd thee, thou shall now cast off,  
And change those qualities thou didst learn from me,  
For masculine virtues, for which seek no tutor,  
But let thy fathers actions by thy precepts.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> As the play progresses, Alvarez's theory on gender expression in the sexes frustrates him. While he stubbornly holds to his belief that one's "natural" physical sex should dictate one's gender performance, his children's difficulty in embracing their new genders forces him to consider whether or not raising them to behave in a cross-gendered way has made it impossible for Clara and Lucio to revert to a different gender expression. He finds himself particularly frustrated with Lucio, as is discussed further below.

<sup>51</sup> *Love's Cure*, 1.2. 61-67, 77-83.

Eugenia reveals that she was pregnant with Lucio when Alvarez was exiled, and she raised Lucio according to feminine gender expression (Lucio has a penchant for gowns, starched ruffs, and other fashionable garments typically worn by women). Believing that her son was brought up in this manner by mere observation alone, Eugenia explains to her son that he will now learn masculinity through the observation of his father's behavior. She unknowingly agrees with Alvarez's belief that heteronormative gender expression should be easily picked up—just as Lucio believed he was a female (and so behaved according to feminine gender expectations), now that he knows he is a male he will be just as capable of mimicking his father's masculinity.

Lucio, playing the role of a dutiful daughter who expresses very little opinion in the matter of socially-preferred gender expression, does not contradict his mother nor does he reveal hesitation in embracing masculinity. Instead, he responds several moments later describing the outfit he would like to wear in order to meet his father: "Pray Madam, let the wastcoat I last wrought / Be made up for my Father: I wil have / A cap and boote-hose sutable to it." Eugenia is not as concerned with her son's fashion interests, and insists instead that "Of that / Wee'l think hereafter Lucio; our thoughts now / Must have no object, but thy Fathers welcome...."<sup>52</sup> Lucio agrees to help his mother with the welcome preparations and does not again mention his choice in apparel. As the prototypical dutiful daughter, Lucio plays the role perfectly—his interests are shallow and vain (rather than expressing any interest in meeting his father or, more importantly, in the decision that he will now have to forego his femininity) and he is easily distracted from one concern in order to diligently obey the authority figure directly above him (in this case, Eugenia). While Clara had a moment to express her opinions and wishes (to remain masculine—as she *appears*), Lucio does not hesitate to change his outfit. It is not clear at this point whether

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<sup>52</sup> *Love's Cure*, 1.2.105-109.

or not Lucio fully comprehends what his mother is asking of him; it seems that Lucio only understands that she has asked him to stop wearing gowns in favor of waistcoats and hose. Throughout the course of the play, however, it is Lucio who seems to have the greatest trouble “reverting” to his “natural” state of masculinity. He soon discovers that gender performance and expression have little to do with simply changing one’s outfit.

In the case of *Love’s Cure*’s cross-dressed siblings, their genders are always already performative. Clara is overly masculinized by her father, resulting in her rejection of feminine concerns; Lucio learns femininity from his mother and struggles to embrace his more (supposedly) “natural” masculine inclinations. Interrupting an emergency tutoring session over the ways to perform masculinity between Bobadilla (Eugenia’s servant) and Lucio, Clara enters dressed in a gown. She has obvious difficulty maneuvering within the confines of the skirts: “...brother why are womens haunches onely limited, confin’d, hoop’d in, as it were with these same scurvy vardingales?” Bobadilla responds, “Because womens haunches onely are most subject to display and fly out.”<sup>53</sup> Having had little exposure to women’s fashion, as well as to the patriarchal function that fashion had, Clara struggles to understand why women are made to wear clothing that does not allow them freedom of mobility.<sup>54</sup> Used to her masculine breeches, Clara is an awkward caricature of femininity. Bobadilla, realizing she needs as much instruction

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<sup>53</sup> *Love’s Cure*, 2.2.69-71. The joke in this exchange, aside from the absurd way in which Clara moves in her feminine attire, is that Lucio and Bobadilla have previously exchanged apparel. Bobadilla does this in an attempt to humiliate Lucio, but it serves to confuse Clara who is unable to recognize her brother (whom she has only just met) when he is dressed as a servant. She addresses Bobadilla as though he were Lucio, so Bobadilla is the one who answers her question. Although Lucio trades his feminine attire for masculine, he still manages to cross socioeconomic boundaries by dressing *down* according to his class. Clara, in her aristocratic woman’s attire, no longer subverts sociosexual boundaries. She has been restored to her socially prescribed gender and sexual identities as well as to her proper socioeconomic status. Bobadilla, however, wants to humiliate Lucio by not permitting him to appear in his “appropriate,” socially expected clothing.

<sup>54</sup> Although I focus on Clara in this example, male children would likewise have been well aware of particular guidelines expected of them within their patriarchal society, especially in the form of clothing. Gendered apparel seems to have been taken for granted, particularly obvious in the early modern English sumptuary codes that did not explicitly govern against men or women crossing gender boundaries in their apparel.



in gender performance as her brother, offers a description of the genders that is typical of the patriarchy:

...I have like charge of you Maddam, I am as well to mollifie you, as to qualifie him: what have you to doe with Armors, and Pistols, and Javelins, and swords, and such tooles? remember Mistresse: nature hath given you a sheath onely, to signifie women are to put up mens weapons, not to draw them: looke you now, is this fit trot for a Gentlewoman? You shall see the Court Ladies move like Goddesses, as if they trod ayre; they will swim you their measures, like whitting-mops as if their feet were finnes, and the hinges of their knees oyld: doe they love to ride great horses, as you doe? no, they love to ride great asses sooner: faith, I know not what to say to'ye both: Custome hath turn'd nature topsie-turvy in you.<sup>55</sup>

At once mocking and instructive, Bobadilla attempts to explain to Clara her place within the patriarchy as a woman—she has a specific role to serve, which is dictated by her relationship to men. She is a sheath while men are the weapons; her physical femaleness requires a specific submission toward those who are physically male, and the patriarchy regulates this submission. Bobadilla promises Clara that other women are much more adept at being feminine and chides her for her preference to act in a masculine manner. Exasperated, he blames the siblings' gender confusion entirely on their upbringing (custom).

As stated earlier, Alvarez shares Bobadilla's concern and walks in on the disastrous tutoring session just after Clara has physically beaten Bobadilla for (what she believes is) his insubordination toward her. Seeing his children dressed according to their physical sexes but

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<sup>55</sup> *Love's Cure*, 2.2.85-96.

still behaving as they always have, he laments, “How now Clara, / Your breeches on still? and your petticoate / Not yet off Lucio? art thou not guelt? [...] Art thou not Clara, turn’d a man indeed / Beneath the girdle? and a woman thou? / Ile have you search’d by—, I strongly doubt; / We must have these things mended....”<sup>56</sup> Alvarez speaks to the suspicion that through the wearing of gender-specific clothing, a physical change in sex is possible; to this end, he even threatens a physical search of his children’s bodies to determine the truth. David Robinson points out that, “Alvarez intends this question sarcastically. No search takes place, and gender deviance rather than anatomical change remains the characters’ concern.”<sup>57</sup> Despite his confidence that his children’s genders have deviated because of their upbringing, Alvarez does not seem prepared to accept the possibility that they have actually changed their physical sexes because of that upbringing. Beaumont and Fletcher resolve these errors in gender education with the introduction of sexual attraction. It is not until Clara understands that her place as a woman is subordinate to her male sexual partner (Vitelli) that she finally completes her transformation from tomboy to woman (and, more importantly, future wife). Likewise, Lucio’s reeducation completes its cycle when he meets and falls in love with a female sexual partner, Genevora.<sup>58</sup> Delivering the play’s final lines, Vitelli concludes that it is only through the power of heteronormative love (sexual arousal) that these cross-gendered siblings can be corrected: “Behold the power of love: lo, nature lost / By custome irrecoverably, past the hope / Of friends restoring, love hath here retriiv’d / To her own habit, made her blush to see / Her so long

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<sup>56</sup> *Love’s Cure*, 2.2.147-155.

<sup>57</sup> David Robinson, *Closeted Writings and Lesbian and Gay Literature*, 215. Robinson is also interested in the clear nod to Ovid that Beaumont and Fletcher make in this particular dialogue. Building upon Marea Mitchell, he points out that a few lines after Alvarez’s outburst the word “metamorphosed” appears—Lucio uses it when directing Vitelli toward Clara, after Vitelli has witnessed the cross-dressed Clara behave like a man when defending Vitelli.

<sup>58</sup> Vitelli is Alvarez’s sworn enemy because of a blood feud established between Alvarez and Vitelli’s father. Genevora is Vitelli’s sister.

monstrous metamorphoses.”<sup>59</sup> Where friends were incapable of restoring the siblings to their “natural” sexes and genders, Vitelli attributes the final success of reeducation to love. Robinson argues that, “Nature must be rescued and re-educated by Love, who *must* be male, since he only operates in this play between oppositely sexed individuals. At the same time, the passage treats as *natural* the gender change wrought by love, a mere retrieval of something lost, while portraying the original effects of custom as *supernatural*, a ‘monstrous metamorphosis.’”<sup>60</sup> The first metamorphosis, where the siblings’ performed genders were confused by their opposite-sex parent, is condemned as a monstrosity by the play’s authors. This could be an admonition to all parents not to attempt to confuse nature because the reeducation of gender is much more difficult than it otherwise appears.<sup>61</sup> The second metamorphosis is not monstrous because it is a *return to nature*. All is set to rights; the female is feminine while the male is masculine.

Beaumont and Fletcher imagine a chaotic social scenario where gender identity is simply a *learned* trait; for them, and it seems for many socio-sexually traditional thinkers of the early modern period, gender is an established and correctable set of behaviors based on a predetermined set of “natural” inclinations prescribed entirely by one’s physical sex. Gender exists on a clearly defined binary of right and wrong; females are right only when they are feminine, males only when they are masculine. Any deviance from this obvious-seeming relationship results in a need to reeducate and re-form the gender identity of the offending party.

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<sup>59</sup> *Love’s Cure*, 5.3.257-261.

<sup>60</sup> Robinsin, 215.

<sup>61</sup> What makes this transformation so difficult, it seems the authors warn their audience, is that this unnatural interruption by custom on the upbringing of cross-gendered children relies entirely upon a *natural* intervention (sexual arousal, i.e. love). Clara and Lucio were fortunate to find themselves naturally attracted to the “correct” (in heteronormative terms) partners—their love for Vitelli and Genevora respectively, because it occurred naturally and was not forced, proves to audiences that the physical body *seeks* heteronormativity. The physically male seeks the physically female and cannot resist such a pairing. Fortunately for these siblings, they were “fixed” by love. A naturally-occurring emotion naturally restored the siblings to their natural genders according to their physical sexes. Where custom takes the two temporarily off-course, nature restores nature.

In this way, Clara is forced not only out of her pants and into a gown, but she is also restrained from participating in social interactions according to her gendered upbringing and is expected to pick up embroidery and feminine concerns as though those behaviors were *natural*. Likewise, Lucio is forced out of his preferred gowns and into breeches; he is ridiculed for his lack of interest (or even lack of knowledge) in engaging other males in physical shows of strength and dominance. Bobadilla, Lucio's tutor, is particularly condemnatory of his charge's lack of masculine interests: "...weare a Petti-coate still, and put on your smock a'monday: I will have a babie o'clouds made for it, like a great girl: nay, if you will needs be starching of Ruffs, and sowing of black-work, I will of a milde, and loving Tutor, become a Tyrant. Your Father has committed you to my charge, and I will make a man, or a mouse on you."<sup>62</sup> Because Lucio shows more interest in the concerns of female fashion, Bobadilla threatens a tyrannical approach to force him into masculinity. Lucio's lack of interest in changing his apparel or even in rejecting his effeminacy in favor of bold masculinity is infuriating to Bobadilla. If demonstration and mimicry are in fact largely responsible in the shaping of gendered behaviors, then Eugenia's tutelage of femininity for her son was successful. Bobadilla seems to realize that Lucio's upbringing, completely in terms of femininity, was gentle and more interested in the concerns of fashion than in the concerns of fighting. In order to right this wrong, Bobadilla must demonstrate strong masculinity to Lucio. Bobadilla seeks to demonstrate through physical force the manner in which Lucio himself should behave when he encounters an overly feminine male. Femininity must be physically dominated by masculinity (either through sex or combat, it seems). Lucio protests, however:

What would you have me doe? this scurvy sword

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<sup>62</sup> *Love's Cure*, 2.2.6-11.

So gals my thigh: I would 'twere burnt: pish, looke  
This cloak will ne'r keep on: these boots too hidebound,  
Make me walk stiffe, as if my leggs were frozen,  
And my Spurs gingle, like a Morris-dancer:  
Lord how my head akes, with this roguish hat;  
This masculine attire, is most uneasie,  
I am bound up in it: I had rather walke  
In folio, againe, loose, like a woman.<sup>63</sup>

Just as Clara struggles in her feminine attire, complaining that she is bound up, Lucio likewise is uncomfortable in masculine clothing for its confinement. His discomfort, he claims, translates into physical pain: stiff walking and headaches are his primary complaints. The qualifications the siblings use to describe their new, socially conforming attire are humorously the same: both Clara and Lucio complain of restricted movements when they were once used to more freedom. Although it is humorous that the siblings use the same language to describe the clothing of the opposite sex, one might suppose that their complaints are more abstract than the siblings let on. Once free to dress in a manner complementary to their genders, Clara and Lucio find themselves newly bound-up by the restrictions of a society obsessed with the risks and consequences of unregulated choices in apparel. While the early modern sumptuary codes focus on the specific *consumption* of textiles (in terms of socioeconomic paranoia), early modern heteronormative patriarchal custom was quite clear on the expectations in place for gendered apparel.

Fear tactics such as the ones bandied about by Philip Stubbes, claiming that physical changes could occur when someone wore the clothing of the opposite sex, and those induced by

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<sup>63</sup> *Love's Cure*, 2.2.11-20. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Lucio's use of the term "folio" here to mean "in a full and loose dress," and also references this particular usage of the term as an example of the definition.

such rumormongers as Laxton, suggesting that a cross-gendered apparel is representative of an uncontrolled sexuality, facilitate a patriarchy that seems to be self-aware of its own fragility. Without specific control over socioeconomic as well as sociosexual concerns, the patriarchy seems to fear chaotic upheaval. Beaumont and Fletcher have written characters that threaten the heteronormative view of gender in the early modern period. Gender is not only mutable according to which upbringing one has received, but it is also flexible enough to change *in spite of* that upbringing in order to favor heteronormative hegemonic expectations. When Lucio and Clara find themselves sexually attracted to opposite-sex partners, they complete their reeducation so that they are realigned with the ideal gender prescribed for their physical sex in order to enter into heterosexual partnerships. *Love's Cure* is not socially subversive but instead fixates on heteronormative paranoia and anxiety while ultimately restoring social balance and normativity.

Throughout *Love's Cure*, the debate between the lasting effects of nature versus custom (or nurture) wages fiercely on—Eugenia and Alvarez so carefully represent the heteronormative hegemony that there seems to be no other possibility for resolution. In the debate of nature versus nurture, gender functions as a real and true result of nature. In fact the parents' constant reiteration that nature has been perverted by custom reaches their children Lucio and Clara in such a way that they themselves likewise cannot conceive of another way of existing within their gender boundaries. Lucio asks his sister, "When wil you be a woman?" Clara replies, "Would I were none. But natures privy Seale assures me one."<sup>64</sup> Despite their discomfort in their new attire, Clara recognizes that she (and likewise Lucio) must play the role predetermined by physical nature: she is physically female and therefore must *be* a woman.<sup>65</sup> Referencing her own

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<sup>64</sup> *Love's Cure*, 2.2.138-139.

<sup>65</sup> This dialogue should recall the earlier conversation she has with her father, in which she wishes she could continue to behave according to how she *appears*, but her wish is condemned by Alvarez who tells her to behave

physical femaleness, Clara does not mention whether or not Lucio should change his behavior according to his physical maleness. According to Anne Duncan:

Masculinity exists in *Love's Cure* only in performance. [...] Femininity, on the other hand, seems to be grounded in anatomy. Yet femininity exists (only) in performance as well. This assertion seems paradoxical, given that several characters in this play define femininity as absence, or passivity, which would seem to be impossible to 'perform.' Clara, however, reveals that passivity is as much of a performance as action, that it too is performed upon another person, that it requires both an object and an audience.<sup>66</sup>

Masculinity takes root through demonstrable anger—when a man is angry, his masculinity entices him to fight against the cause of that anger. For instance, when Bobadilla watches Lucio emerge for the first time attired in men's clothing, he flies into a rage. It is not the clothing that has angered Bobadilla; rather, he is frustrated by Lucio's constant complaining and his incessant need to participate in feminine matters, such as minding the kitchen staff.<sup>67</sup> Lucio does not take to his lessons in masculinity because he is used to the more passive, supervisory roles of the aristocratic female. Incensed by Lucio's seemingly stubborn unwillingness to play the part of a man, Bobadilla physically threatens the young man in an attempt to encourage some anger from him as well. Bobadilla tells Lucio to imagine that he is Vitelli, Alvarez's enemy, and that Vitelli is charging Lucio with his sword raised—in order to play the part convincingly, and again to

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according to who she *is*. This ontological question of *being* male or female seems to be predetermined according to physical appearances rather than the siblings' psychological or emotional needs. The unrelenting rule of physical sex forces the siblings into clothing and genders that do not suit them; however, by play's end, their discomfort is resolved by their apparent innate heterosexuality.

<sup>66</sup> Anne Duncan, "It Takes a Woman to Play a Real Man: Clara as Hero(ine) of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Love's Cure*," 404.

<sup>67</sup> In spite of Lucio's begging Bobadilla not to be angry with him, Bobadilla responds, "I am angry, and I will be angry: *diablo*' what should you doe in the Kitchin, cannot the Cooks lick their fingers without your overseeing? nor the maids make pottage, except your dogs-head be in the pot?" (2.2.2-5)

encourage some anger to boil over in Lucio, Bobadilla uses harsh language and threats of physical violence. His attempts are fruitless, however; Lucio refuses to draw his sword even against his father's charging enemy in this imaginary portrayal of Vitelli. Lucio attempts to solve the feud through words: "Signior, what happen'd 'twixt my Sire and your / Kinsman, was long before I saw the world, / No fault of mine, nor will I justifie / My Fathers crimes: forget sir, and forgive, / 'Tis Christianity: I pray put up your sword...."<sup>68</sup> Lucio has performed the concept of passive femininity perfectly: it is the lack of action in the face of violence that makes Lucio an ideal woman. Bobadilla is at a loss: "Oh craven-chicken of a Cock o'th'game: well, what remedy? did thy father see this, O' my conscience, he would cut of thy Masculine gender, crop thine eares, beat out thine eyes, and set thee in one of the Peare-trees for a scar-crow...."<sup>69</sup> Passivity, a virtue in a woman, is the undoing of the man asked to demonstrate masculinity.

Even after meeting Genevora and undergoing his gender transformation, Lucio continues to understand his experiences in terms of passive femininity. Rather than using masculine language to describe his sexual arousal upon meeting Genevora, Lucio maintains the feminine speech patterns he learned as a child while attempting to describe physically male experiences. Begging Genevora for a kiss (rather than simply raping her as Alvarez suggests to him earlier), Lucio is obliged and immediately experiences sexual arousal for the first time:

What strange new motions do I feele? my veines  
Burn with an unknown fire: in every part  
I suffer alteration: I am poysond,  
Yet languish with desire againe to taste it,  
So sweetly it works on me. [...]

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<sup>68</sup> *Love's Cure*, 2.2.45-49.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.2.56-59.



How can this be?  
She is a woman, as my mother is,  
And her I have kiss'd often, and brought off  
My lips unscorch'd....<sup>70</sup>

Lucio is rightfully confused: if all males desired all females, then he should not have been capable of kissing his mother without some sexual arousal. Indeed, not all males do desire all females, so his rare encounter with desire when he kisses Genevora reinforces the lesson Clara learned when she acknowledged her desire for Vitelli: sexual arousal (“love”), which is suggested to be *natural* in this play, will rectify all wrongs committed by improper guidance in customary gender expression.

Describing arousal as “new motions,” a peculiar burning in his veins, and “alteration,” Lucio seems to be experiencing an erection.<sup>71</sup> According to Beaumont and Fletcher’s characterization of it, arousal in men is expressed differently from women: for the “gentler” sex, desire manifests as submission and weakness in the face of masculine strength and virility. The erect penis in the male, however, represents a desire that is *active* and *actionable*—with his erection, a man is able to penetrate and subjugate a woman. Peter Berek argues that in terms of Lucio’s arousal, “[e]rection and contemplated orgasm remasculate the womanish youth.”<sup>72</sup> While Clara’s masculinity must be tamped down in favor of a more subdued femininity, Lucio’s masculinity is free to rise (literally) so that it may subjugate femininity in a woman. Lucio’s “natural” gender identity is set free through his erection by way of heteronormative sexual arousal. Bobadilla is proven correct in assuming that one or the other of two choices would

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<sup>70</sup> *Love’s Cure*, 4.4.8-11, 12-15.

<sup>71</sup> Whether or not this is his first erection at all or from sexual attraction is not made clear in the text, although Lucio does seem surprised by it.

<sup>72</sup> Peter Berek, “Cross-Dressing, Gender, and Absolutism in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays,” 364.

cause Lucio to revert to his true gender: either he must be enraged into a fight (and thereby demonstrate masculinity's strength by defeating and feminizing other men) or he must be moved to sexual arousal by the love of a woman. Through the strength of a particular passionate action (a duel or a sexual act), the active performance of masculinity will make even the most effeminate male a real man.

Unfortunately for Lucio, he does not have access to years of training in masculinized rhetoric in order to describe his strange new experiences; instead, he must rely upon effeminate descriptions, which may lead to confusion about that which he is attempting to describe.

According to David Robinson:

...the first half of the passage [4.4.12-16] makes Lucio's gender change sound like a sex change, a bodily change, insofar as he reports physical sensations. [...] Even more interestingly, the new emotions have not, in fact, precipitated a gender change from feminine to masculine. For in the second half of his little declaration, Lucio emphasizes the conventionally and paradoxically *unmanning* effects of love: it's a sweet poison that leaves him languishing, craving, suffering. All three verbs, while technically active, convey a passive state. Hence the final line [4.4.16]: something is being done to Lucio, something is *working on* him.<sup>73</sup>

Robinson is astute to point out the passivity of Lucio's word choice; to be sure, he appears to be a victim of a sexual arousal that is capable of working upon him without consent. Indeed, Lucio's language smacks of femininity, a gender that is historically more than familiar with the victimization that comes from sexual violation. Lucio, however, is not to be read as fully cured

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<sup>73</sup> Robinson, 214. Love's curative power is in its ability to both masculinize and feminize—true heterosexual love, in a heteronormative hegemony, will ultimately work to create males and females who can appropriately love one another.

from his femininity in this passage alone; and, surely, some level of forgiveness ought to be extended toward the youth for his inability to express in masculine vocabulary these new and strange sensations. Not yet a dominant male, Lucio's entrance into masculinity seems to take more finesse than does Clara's femininity; while Clara is expected to understand her place innately and to obey that natural order, Lucio undergoes specific training and tests in order demonstrate his masculinity.<sup>74</sup> Boys must receive instruction in proper fighting techniques, for instance, which Lucio has never before received. Bobadilla's early frustration with the youth in Act Two for Lucio's refusal to attempt to learn how to fight indicates Bobadilla's (if not the early modern culture's in general) assumption that a male of a particular age will be capable of specific masculine performances.

In fact, Genevora, like Robinson, does not see Lucio as a completely transformed male by their mere exchanging of a kiss. When Lucio begs from Genevora her glove as a token of her love, proclaiming that he will become her slave, Genevora begins to offer it freely. Lamorall, Vitelli's friend and enemy to Alvarez, snatches it away from her. In that moment Genevora recognizes an opportunity for Lucio to prove his masculinity to her; she asks him, "What will you doe?" Lucio responds strangely that Lamorall may take his life instead of her glove. Unimpressed, Genevora accuses Lucio "...even now you appeard valiant."<sup>75</sup> This *appearance* of masculinity, when absent of convincing action to support it, does little to inspire confidence in Genevora that Lucio is anything more than an effeminate male. In fact, Genevora does not protest when Lamorall snatches the glove from her, and instead she turns her attention to Lucio, expecting some show of masculinity (perhaps a drawn sword or a promise of a duel over the

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<sup>74</sup> We might assume that Clara did, as well, although her masculinization with Alvarez is not represented in the text itself. It is offered as a given that Clara would have had to *learn* to be masculine—to fight and to speak with masculine vocabulary.

<sup>75</sup> *Love's Cure*, 4.4.36-39, 42.

glove—*some* kind of action). When Lucio reveals that any show of masculinity she had witnessed in him before was for his father's sake, Genevora replies:

Not in your own?  
Kneel to thy rivall and thine enemy?  
Away unworthy creature, I begin  
To hate my selfe, for giving entrance to  
A good opinion of thee: For thy torment,  
If my poore beauty be of any power,  
Mayst thou doat on it desperately: but never  
Presume to hope for grace, till thou recover  
And weare the favour that was ravish'd from thee.<sup>76</sup>

Lucio has a woman's understanding of the requirements and social expectations for performed masculinity; even then, however, Genevora seems to have a clearer, more distinctly socialized, expectation for masculinity than has Lucio. Anne Duncan explains that, "[m]asculinity is a performance that uses, even requires, certain props: knives, swords, and guns, women's 'favors,' and of course (as Bobadilla remind us all too often) the phallus."<sup>77</sup> Genevora expects Lucio to actively *demonstrate* his masculinity by utilizing one of the socially acceptable masculine props in order to overpower Lamorall and retrieve her glove; when he merely offers his life instead, he reverts to the passive, victimized female. Genevora has no interest or need for an effeminate male who essentially plays her own social role; presumably having been raised in a custom aligned with her nature, she seeks out the active complement to her passivity.

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<sup>76</sup> *Love's Cure*, 4.4.44-52.

<sup>77</sup> Duncan, 400.

Lucio, watching Genevora and Lamorall turn away from him with the purloined glove, realizes that his masculinity, although awakened, is not fully developed. He understands that it is not enough to use his words (a feminine expression), but he must *act* like a man:

My womanish soul, which hitherto hath governed  
This coward flesh, I feele departing from me;  
And in me by her beauty is inspir'd  
A new and masculine one: instructing me  
What's fit to doe or suffer; powerfull love  
That hast with loud, and yet a pleasing thunder  
Rous'd sleeping manhood in me, thy new creature,  
Perfect thy worke so that I may make known  
Nature (though long kept back) wil have her owne.<sup>78</sup>

Again, Lucio acknowledges masculinity as a gender that *rises* rather than one that is subdued (as in the case of Clara's femininity); in fact, his masculinity, he comes to realize, is one that had always already existed within him (*naturally*), "sleeping" until desire causes it to *rise*. This arousal of masculinity is not enough, Lucio recognizes, to win the affection of Genevora who suggests that she is attracted to real men. Employing some language of action, asking the personified Love to instruct him "[w]hat's fit to *doe* or *suffer*."<sup>79</sup> Although his request for instruction of what to "suffer" might ring effeminate, Lucio offers a double-entendre for the feminine word: perhaps he foresees himself *suffering* through the forced act of fighting Lamorall for the stolen love token. As a newly masculinized man, Lucio does not have the experience of fighting victoriously to offer him a thirst for the duel (unlike his sister Clara). Instead, the fight

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<sup>78</sup> *Love's Cure*, 4.4.54-62.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.4.58.

is suffering for Lucio, but his use of the word does not necessarily suggest an unwillingness to “doe.” Masculinity requires instruction;<sup>80</sup> Lucio, recognizing that his only successful tutor is Love (or, sexual arousal), looks to Love as his best opportunity to learn how to be the man Genevora desires. Lucio does successfully fight Lamorall for the glove and earns the respect of his enemy when he does not take Lamorall’s life in addition to Genevora’s glove. The two men trade hats and swords (Lucio having won Lamorall’s in the fight and volunteering his own to the defeated man), and Lucio requests friendship from Lamorall: “...which if / You wil not grant me but on further triall / Of manhood in me, seeke me when you please, / (And though I might refuse it with mine honour) / Win them again, and weare them: so good morrow.”<sup>81</sup> Left stunned by the mercy of the effeminate youth who bested him in combat, Lamorall reflects: “I nere knew what true valour was till now; / And have gain’d more by this disgrace, then all / The honours I have won...”<sup>82</sup> Here Lamorall seems to conclude that this newly-awakened masculinity blended with an upbringing in femininity results in some new form of valor that he had not previously witnessed. Suddenly capable with a sword, Lucio is masculinized enough to win over the affection of Genevora; but it is his femininity that earns him the respect of other males. Perhaps this new gender (one that is neither perfectly masculine nor perfectly feminine) lends itself to the needs of those who do identify on either end of the gender spectrum. An early modern woman

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<sup>80</sup> In fact, Bobadilla finds himself more than willing to serve as Lucio’s tutor in order to instruct him on how to be a man. “...if you will needs be starching of Ruffs, and sowing of black-work, I will of a milde, and loving Tutor, become a Tyrant. Your father has committed you to my charge, and I will make a man, or a mouse on you” (2.2.2-11). Bobadilla demonstrates masculinity to Lucio through the threat of violence, the threat of tyranny. When Bobadilla engages in mock fight with Lucio, claiming to take on the role of Vitelli, Lucio responds in peaceful, subdued, effeminate language: “...I pray put up your sword, / Ile give you any satisfaction / That may become a Gentleman; however / I hope you are bred to more humanity / Then to revenge my Fathers wrong on me / That crave your love, and peace...” (2.2.49-54).

<sup>81</sup> *Love’s Cure*, 5.1.90-94. This scene recalls the imaginary fight between Bobadilla and Lucio in Act Two. Whereas Lucio’s attempt in Act Two to quell through words Bobadilla’s rage only served to incense his tutor further, here Lamorall is moved both by Lucio’s physical prowess as well as by the request for friendship, going so far as to call Lucio’s behavior valorous.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.1.95-97.

respects the overt active performance of masculinity while an early modern man is softened by the subtle passivity of femininity.

Clara's cure by love comes from her initial sexual arousal by and immediate voluntary submission to Vitelli. Still dressed as a male soldier, shortly after returning to Seville with her father, Clara defends Vitelli in a skirmish against her father when she sees that he is at a disadvantage. Vitelli believes that Clara is truly a male and seeks to thank her for her services; however, when he learns that she is a female, his confusion and curiosity are piqued. Rescuing him from a second confrontation (this time with his mistress Malroda), Clara confesses her attraction to her father's enemy and, without coaxing from her love interest, suddenly agrees to prove herself feminine. Vitelli confesses his concern for loving a cross-dressed woman: "...to take you for a wife / Were greater hazard, for should I offend you / (As tis not easy still to please a woman) / You are of so great a spirit, that I must learn / To weare your petticoat, for you wil have / My breeches from me."<sup>83</sup> Vitelli recognizes that should he enter into a relationship with Clara, he risks (as all men risk, according to Vitelli's sweeping generalization) displeasing her, which could result in his emasculation. Clara replies:

Rather from this houre  
I here abjure all actions of a man,  
And wil esteem it happinesse from you  
To suffer like a woman: love, true love  
Hath made a search within me, and expel'd  
All but my naturall softnesse, and made perfect  
That which my parents care could not begin.

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<sup>83</sup> *Love's Cure*, 4.2.179-184.

I wil show strength in nothing, but my duty,  
And glad desire to please you, and in that  
Grow every day more able.<sup>84</sup>

Clara, struck by sexual arousal ostensibly for the first time, finally aligns with her father's view of gender performance: she sees her masculinity as something that can be renounced with relative ease. Love (sexual arousal and desire) has restored her to her natural femininity, which her parents failed to do through tutoring and training. Vitelli replies that "...though you have / A Souldiers arme, your lips appear as if / They were a Ladies."<sup>85</sup> Clara, still holding her sword, represents the physical manifestation of masculinity while likewise speaking according to passive femininity, promising not to show any strength except in her obedience. Vitelli claims that Clara still appears to be more hermaphroditic than fully female; Clara invites him to put her lips through "triall" before they seal their love with two kisses.<sup>86</sup>

When Clara offers her sword, her phallus, to Vitelli in her own symbolic emasculation, she "...transforms it [her sword] from a killing weapon to a love-token, forcing Vitelli to redefine what he may do as a man if he wants to enact the role of lover." Low continues, "From this point, Clara moves steadily toward revising less the notion of femininity (as she has before) than the notion of masculinity. In so doing, she satisfies society by conforming to accepted notions of womanhood...."<sup>87</sup> Just as Lucio presents a "new" gender to Lamorall by his gentle masculinity, Clara shows an attempt to blend both femininity and masculinity in unexpected ways. While demonstrating that she will submit herself to the action of masculinity (performed now by Vitelli in her place), she uses passive femininity to achieve her goal: sexual union with Vitelli. Her

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<sup>84</sup> *Love's Cure*, 4.2.184-193.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.2.198-200.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.2.200-202.

<sup>87</sup> Low, 293.



version of femininity is still tinged with hints of her previous gender manifestation; Clara is feminine but she begins to understand how her femininity can work in her favor in order to gain what she desires from those who are masculine.

*Love's Cure* ends in the explosive confrontation between Alvarez and Vitelli in a state-sanctioned duel. The state agrees to allow these two sides to duel in order to put to rest the feud that began between Alvarez and Vitelli's father years ago. Begging Vitelli not to participate in the duel with her father and brother, Clara reasons:

Custome, that wrought so cunningly on nature  
In me, that I forgot my sex, and knew not  
Whether my body femall were, or male,  
You did unweave, and had the power to charme  
A new creation in me, made me feare  
To think on those deeds I did perpetrate....<sup>88</sup>

Not only does her sexual attraction to Vitelli have the power to make her question her previous gender expression, Vitelli himself also receives the credit for causing her to “feare” the masculine behavior she once exalted. Jennifer Low argues this realization in Clara is necessary in order to restore heteronormative balance to the patriarchy. In using her words, and later physical threat of self-harm, to convince Vitelli not to duel with her family, “[Clara] works within her self-imposed constraints to master Vitelli without resorting to the superior swordsmanship that would shame him to acknowledge.”<sup>89</sup> Although Vitelli seems to find himself attracted to Clara for her natural masculinity, he also does not find it suitable or even palatable to woo a woman who is more of a man than he is; Low suggests that Vitelli “...fears to

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<sup>88</sup> *Love's Cure*, 5.3.90-5.

<sup>89</sup> Low, 295.

take on any role toward her but that of conquering Theseus” to Clara’s Amazonian warrior.<sup>90</sup> Clara’s plea, and certainly even her physical threat, works on Vitelli because she epitomizes the language of femininity (particularly in her choice of the word “unweave”), despite enacting masculinity by aiming a sword at her own breast. Her plea is self-deprecating and apologetic; she describes custom as “cunning,” which strengthens her rhetorical choice of “feare” later. Because custom tricked her, Clara imagines herself as a vulnerable, weak-minded woman, one who should find the physical showiness of masculinity not only off-putting but truly *fearsome*. It is not merely Clara’s threat of self-harm that suggests the performativity of gender; indeed, even her very words drip with socially expected, prescribed gender normativity. As a (newly feminine) woman, Clara recognizes her place within this performance. She understands that her role is no longer to wield the sword against an enemy, but rather she must hold it to her own breast; Clara must self-deprecate in speech and action, apologizing for her femininity while likewise holding it up as an example by which other women should mold their own expressions of the feminine gender. Should she fail to do this, then she stands to lose the one thing she has come to value above all other desires: love with Vitelli.

Later, when Genevora begs him not to participate in the duel between Vitelli and Alvarez (following Clara’s lead with Vitelli), she insists that Lucio should be moved by her tears because he is not so far removed from his femininity that he would be hardened against a woman’s emotions: “Be thou more mercifull: thou bear’s fewer yeers, / Art lately wean’d from soft effeminacy, / A maidens manners, and a maidens heart / Are neighbours still to thee: be then more milde, / Proceed not to this combat...”<sup>91</sup> This request is not quite the paradox to her initial insistence that Lucio actively *perform* masculinity against another man (Lamorall) as it may

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<sup>90</sup> Low, 295.

<sup>91</sup> *Love’s Cure*, 5.3.111-115.

seem. While Genevora does not want the duel to progress, it is for the safety of the men involved that she is greatly concerned and not because of a demonstrable machismo.

When parents fail to raise their children according to their God-given natures, as Mulcaster advises, those children are at risk for behaving at odds with God's natural plan. In the case of Clara and Lucio, love (sexual arousal) was the best (and it seems only) cure for the errors of their parents' choice to raise them according to the opposite gender. In a heteronormative experience, only heterosexual arousal can restore gender to its hegemonic performance. Once the siblings have fallen in love and have experienced arousal in some way, they are capable of behaving according to the social expectations of femininity or masculinity; in fact, their performances are no longer playacting but are instead real and true conversions. Moll Frith, having never fallen in love, does not undergo this restoration with her natural gender. Instead, she chooses to avoid sexual arousal entirely, arguing that she is man enough for herself. Moll's chosen gender expression cannot be easily contained by hegemonic heteronormative sociosexual boundaries. She cross-dresses in order to express her own natural inclination toward masculinity; because she is a woman who naturally identifies as masculine (there is no indication that her parents raised her to believe she was not physically female), she stands in direct opposition to the hegemonic Christian belief that God establishes one's gender identity in the same instance as he establishes one's physical sex. In this way, she is seen as a monster, as someone who is unnatural and against nature. Because she is monstrous, Moll cannot be cured and is not cured by play's end. Perhaps instead it is Moll's peers who are meant to be "cured." Those who assume that rebellion breeds subversion and that Moll is a danger to heteronormative sociosexual expectations are proven wrong when she rejects the idea of getting married while she likewise plays an active role in the union between Sebastian and Mary Fitzallard. Even those

who seem the most subversive might, surprisingly, prove to be the most supportive of particular social customs.

Although *The Roaring Girl* suggests that subversive individuals are often well-meaning, Beaumont and Fletcher demonstrate in *Love's Cure* that once a specific amount of “damage” has been done, only natural sexual arousal (love) is capable of restoring both natural and social order. They do not seem to agree with Dekker and Middleton’s claim that opting out of sexual experiences is a potential resolution for the subversive member of society. According to Beaumont and Fletcher, when an individual opts out of the experience of love and sexual arousal, then that individual is doomed to remain on the outskirts of social boundaries, never categorized and accepted into hegemonic heteronormative sexual order. Both plays, however, recommend a change, a “cure”: either the society must learn to accept the difference in the subversive individual or that individual must undergo rigorous training in order to restore satisfactorily hegemonic sociosexual order.

## Conclusion

### Masterful Categorization

Fixation on labeling individuals according to gender and sexual preference ultimately alienates those who are difficult to label. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cross-dressers and the hermaphrodites often demonstrated the sheer complexity of conforming to a particular category. When asked “who/what *are* you,” the early modern hermaphrodite was forced to choose a heteronormative identity, one that fit within a well-established sociosexual stratosphere. In fact, it was not just the hermaphrodites who faced this domination by the ruling class; all individuals necessarily proclaimed their identities in order to *be* identified by others. The early modern observer had a social right to the answer, to knowing who the other person *was*. Answering to a specific identity was socially construed; although the individual may have attempted to answer the “I am” question with as much accuracy and authenticity as possible, the “authentic” identity was a farce, for it depended entirely upon ideological convention. For Shakespeare’s, Middleton and Dekker’s, and Fletcher and Beaumont’s cross-dressed female characters, identity flows from a nature that is simultaneously aligned with and at odds against socioreligious perceptions.

The gender and sex categories within which an early modern individual would have been expected to locate an identity revealed dichotomous possibilities: an individual could identify as masculine or feminine, male or female. Whether the individual ascribed to Galenic or Aristotelian models of the origin of biological sex, the options were limited. In fact, the gender

category often seemed to follow from the sex category: a biological male should by his nature identify as masculine; if he could not, then there were ways to correct the incongruous identities.<sup>1</sup> These gender and sex categories relied entirely upon socially-dictated definitions, definitions that are often articulated by a specific ruling class or dominant religion. Grounded in traditional, heteronormative expectations and rituals, the definitions for the categories informed the early modern individual about the parameters within which he or she could enact and embody masculinity or femininity. With categorical similarities leaving little room for intricate or non-normative modes of expression, the individual alienated by a particular category either chose to submit to the dominating philosophies of his or her hegemony, or the individual embraced alienation and submitted to the authority of hegemonic rule by enacting his or her identity on the social fringe.

These categories sought to encompass but could not possibly contain all possible identities and expressions. Scholars have demonstrated where inappropriate gender labels can lead to deeply limited and limiting conversations, the consequences of which are demonstrated today in sociopolitical debates on the “nature” of human sexuality. The result of previous decades’ scholarship is a suggestion that the pursuit of categorizing one’s gender for the early moderns would have also had some sort of connection to one’s sexuality. A history of gender expression became a history of sexuality. Tying the two disparate constructs together is dangerous, if not damaging; it gives rise to an underlying assumption that one’s gender identity and sexual expression simultaneously inform and are informed by one another. While stereotypes for non-normative genders and sexualities indicate the places where hegemonic

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<sup>1</sup> With the availability of guides like Ascham’s that describe in detail the methods for raising children of a specific gender, as well as of plays like *Love’s Cure* that offer commentary on the curative effect sexual attraction and desire have on one’s gender expression, the educated early modern individual may not have imagined there to be a great deal of choice in the matter of performing according to a gender not immediately associated with physical sex.

dominance has attempted to legitimize a correlation between these two identities, scholarship has already proven that this is merely an act of domination upon non-hegemonic structures.

The violent dominance on gender and sexual identities and expression indicates crisis points for the early moderns, particularly in the cases of those whose identities could not be easily categorized and contained, those who existed on the outskirts of hegemonic labeling. In an effort to institutionalize and categorize, or correct and punish, those individuals' non-normative identities, the ruling class imposed codes of dress as well as expectations of how the identity was performed. Hegemonic enforcement of these expectations reveals violence on the body as well as on the psyche of the individual who attempted to articulate and express their seemingly self-determined identities. The cases of the early modern hermaphrodites, recollected by Paré particularly, demonstrate the overwhelming sense of power hegemonic categorization wielded over individuals whose biological sexes were unclear. Once the early modern hermaphrodite indicated an attraction to another individual, he or she was given a heteronormative identity that could not be subverted upon threat of execution.<sup>2</sup> The hermaphrodite assigned a particular sex and gender identity, regardless if that is the one that suits the hermaphrodite's personal preference, *performs* identity according to the expectations imposed upon that identity by hegemonic discourses. A hermaphrodite determined more

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<sup>2</sup> According to Paré: "Male and female hermaphrodites are those who have both sets of sexual organs well-formed, and they can help and be used in reproduction; and both the ancient and modern laws have obliged and still oblige these latter to choose which sex organs they wish to use, and they are forbidden on pain of death to use any but those they will have chosen, on account of the misfortunes that could result from such. For some of them have abused their situation, with the result that, through mutual and reciprocal use, they take their pleasure first with one set of sex organs and then with the other: first with those of a man, then with those of a woman, because they have the *natures* of man and of woman suitable to such an act..." (27). The danger in the hermaphrodite's sexual fluidity is demonstrated by the supposed "misfortunes" Paré alludes to; the hermaphrodite can take pleasure in the sex act with either men or women. Paré does not seem to imagine a potential for homosexual sex acts with a hermaphrodite; explaining how to determine if a hermaphrodite is more male or more female, he explains that "...such a thing will be recognized by the genitalia, to wit, whether the female sex organ is of proper dimensions to receive the male rod [penis] and whether the menstrues flow through it..." (27). A hermaphrodite might be considered female because of her ability to menstruate as well as whether her vagina is developed enough to be used in a heterosexual sex act with a penis.

biologically female than male would be expected to participate in heterosexual sex acts in order to *demonstrate* femininity to the hegemony that dominates her. The identities that categorize one's gender and sex are expressed according to socially-construed performances dictated by hegemonic expectations of heteronormative and queer behaviors.

Some of Shakespeare's female characters demonstrate the performativity of a categorized identity, sometimes agreeing with Stubbes' assessment that individuals are capable of changing their identities in often alarming ways, such as through the process of cross-dressing the female body to appear male. This misrepresentation of one's biological ("God-given") sex demonstrates that identity can be fluid and circumstantial, which suggests that the act of categorizing individual identity structures is a futile effort, but one that likewise requires some form of violent enforcement. Shakespeare's female characters, demonstrating an opportunity to "opt-in" to the performativity of identity, are spared the level of violence enforced upon the hermaphrodite and transvestite body. The characters and their boy actors, however, reveal the crisis points upon which identity and hegemonic expectations for gendered performance encounter one another. The boy actor must acknowledge hegemonic categories for femininity in his performance—either he will enact those categories "accurately," or he will satirize them; either of these performances reifies the authority with which the hegemony asserts and dominates categorical expressions. Additionally, the boy actor portraying a cross-dressing female character must acknowledge both hegemonic definitions and expectations of masculinity, as well as how the hegemony asserts that women perceive these gendered performances. The boy actor portraying Rosalind, then, must simultaneously enact Rosalind's femininity according to heteronormative definitions, while acknowledging social-prescriptions for masculinity through the expectations of femininity performing masculinity. As complex as this refraction and reflection of gender



performativity is, the boy actor might have managed quite well, particularly in the early modern period when social expectations of gendered performances appeared clear.

The clarity of these expectations is not always a given; the characters of Beaumont and Fletcher, as well as of Dekker and Middleton, demonstrate when nature and so-called “custom” jar against one another—heterosexual love and attraction is the corrective force that refigures these individuals’ identities and returns them to their socially designated category (categories). Moll shirks her socially designated category while also reifying it and acknowledging its superiority over her identity—by abstaining from sex (as she claims to still be chaste) and abstaining from marriage, Moll categorizes herself according to the outer fringe and does not find an identity under heteronormative structures. When she refuses to partake in the categorical identity-making that her neighbors participate in and attempt to force her into, Moll’s actions speak loud and clear: “These structures have such great authority that I cannot subvert them with my abnormal identity; therefore, I will remain an outcast.”<sup>3</sup> The options are either an enforcement of a heteronormative category for one’s gender identity, or a refusal to allow one to participate in that categorization through the identity of an outcast. In reality, all individuals are “outcasts” because identity is fluid and circumstantial. The expression of gender relies upon heteronormative categories that are determined by hegemonic domination over the citizenry. While an individual may not feel that his or her gender and biological sex pair up together, let alone the individual’s sexuality and how it relates to those other identities, the expression of all of these identities is always already socially prescribed and predetermined.

Fletcher and Beaumont’s sibling characters Lucio and Clara chafe against the attempt to realign their identities according to heteronormative strictures. *Love’s Cure* examines the

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<sup>3</sup> Moll’s own words: “...a wife, you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey, therefore I’ll ne’er go about it” (*The Roaring Girl* 2.2.37-40).

relationship between what Fletcher and Beaumont call nature and “custom.” Although Lucio and Clara’s parents, Alvarez and Eugenia, expect their children to easily revert to the gender expression and identity with which they were born (their “natures”), the children find such a task daunting, if not altogether impossible. Neither Lucio nor Clara are motivated to make these changes on their own; before their parents reunited, the siblings were content to continue performing their preferred gender through their preferred expressions—Lucio in gowns and primarily spending time indoors, Clara in breeches and cavorting with soldiers. According to Fletcher and Beaumont (and Paré), the element necessary to initiate a heteronormative change in the siblings’ gender performance was true love. Desire and attraction encourage the siblings to drop the training they received from “custom” in order to enact the opposite gender’s socially prescribed performance; falling in love offers the necessary motivation to masculinize Lucio and feminize Clara in order for them to enter into heteronormative relationships that presumably result in marriages.

The performativity of these characters’ genders plays itself out on the stage of attraction, under the presumption of prospective marriage. Even the most queer gender expression, one that does not particularly follow heteronormative restrictions and requirements, is normalized through sexual attraction, desire, arousal, and marriage. Early modern expectations for married individuals required identities that could easily be categorized as masculine and feminine, male and female; according to the cross-dressing early modern characters (to include Moll), marriage represents the great equalizer. When a character cannot commit to dominance at work within the rigid construct of marital expectations, then that character cannot be appropriated into hegemonic heteronormativity. The queer character who continues to pursue a queer identity expression remains on the outskirts of identity categories; granted, this casting-out itself is a category, one

that relies upon the authority of hegemonic dominance in order to place the queer identity as an undeniable Other. The Other performs in a specifically prescribed manner, as well, demonstrating beyond all doubt that hegemonic heteronormativity is the ruling ideology, even in terms of queer performance.

If gender is a performance, then the script was always already written by the ruling class according to whatever agenda seemed urgent at the time. Once rigid, set, and seemingly simple categories deteriorate under close inspection—boundaries fall away, definitions lose their meaning, identities break free in pursuit of “authenticity.” Perhaps this pursuit will never truly be realized because all identities have already been scripted and reinscripted for individuals who seek an active agency in the performed expression of their identities. The categories fail to perfectly encapsulate the individual identity, but the identity relies upon that category; the desire to complete the sentences “I am,” “you are,” “we are” with seemingly “authentic” adjectives pushes individuals toward hegemonic terms. While the scholars of previous decades sought to understand the complexity of gender expression under the rubric of sexual expression, tomorrow’s scholars will be challenged to break down the categories and replace them with fluid constructs of identity. To answer this challenge, however, may be impossible—if identity is always determined according to preset ideological norms, then any identity (no matter how fluid) will either seek to align itself within those hegemonic discourses or stand opposed to them while simultaneously acknowledging hegemonic dominance.

Modern cross-gender casting choices offer commentary on the complexities inherent in limiting oneself to specific categorical identities; the move to cast productions of plays containing male and female characters with actors of the same sex is reminiscent of the early modern practice to cast boy actors as female characters. Similarly to the refraction and reflection

the boy actors' performances offered early modern audiences on perceptions of gendered performances, these modern-day cross-casts demonstrate fluidity in identity expression with jarring consequences. Judith Rose recounts the 2002 Company of Shakespeare's Globe production of *Twelfth Night*, directed by Tim Carroll, citing an example of (apparently deliberate) poorly veiled cross-gender casting: "[Paul] Chahidi's corseted performance as Maria was fascinating in its effect; at once both brawny and constrained, the large burly actor was clearly male, yet unnervingly feminine in his movements."<sup>4</sup> The deliberate casting of this otherwise apparently masculine male actor as a feminine female character demonstrates hegemonic assumptions of the supposedly clear connections between performances of gender and sex identities. The bearded Maria enacts Brecht's expectation for educational potential in performance through alienation. If Chahidi's Maria is meant to perform femininity "unnervingly," the performance itself alienates audiences insofar as they are encouraged by this embodiment of male femininity to question *why* the performance is shocking in the first place. Chahidi's Maria unabashedly demonstrates that the methods an individual uses to embody gender are determined according to heteronormative delineations of gendered performance. Despite his beard and "brawny" physique, Chahidi proclaims with his "unnervingly feminine" Maria that, following hegemonic codes, *anyone* can play femininity regardless if it is one's authentic, self-determined identity structure.

Perhaps this realization startles modern audiences because identity-making has shifted from the early modern object-orientation ("you are") to one that is subject-oriented ("I am"). In the case of a cross-cast actor performing the apparently incongruous or unexpected gender/sex pair, the modern observer might recoil from or laugh at the realization that identity is indeed as

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<sup>4</sup> Judith Rose, "Performing Gender at the Globe," 219.

authentic as a scripted performance because hegemony has always already provided a script. Modern individuals may balk at the possibility that their hard-won identities, the identities they have spent a lifetime targeting and developing, are little more than a performance informed by the expectations already prescribed and laid out in clear terms by a heteronormative hegemony that dictates how categories of gender and sex can be embodied and enacted. Authenticity falls away from these identities, perhaps allowing for a far greater crisis—who, or what, determines the individual identity and the ways in which an individual enacts and embodies that identity? Can the individual reject hegemonic rigid categorical parameters in order to define new constructs of identity? Although identity construction has seen a shift from the object to the subject, the individual is not free from scrutiny as an object from other individuals. Anyone who states “I am” faces judgment from others who will determine whether or not the individual in fact embodies specific expectations for the performance of that identity.

Fraught with the potential for criticism, gender and sex labels leave non-normative individuals with little room for creative reimagination of socially accepted methods of expression. Heteronormativity pervades identity structures so deeply that individuals with non-normative identities rely upon hegemonic terms and definitions in order to categorize themselves. Moll Frith demonstrates this struggle in *The Roaring Girl* as a character (albeit one who is based on a historical cross-dressing woman) who not only defines herself in terms of hegemonic values (female chastity, sanctity of marriage, and the roles of women in marriage), but who also assists another couple into their socially predetermined roles of husband and wife. Despite Moll’s unwillingness to force herself into the unbending category of dutiful wife, she does not reject the authority of that category outright. She acknowledges the importance of this structure when she participates in the marriage plot, and she uses the terminology of hegemonic

heteronormativity when she both defends her chastity and explains her decision to remain unmarried. Moll says nothing about entering into a homosexual relationship with another woman; perhaps Moll is “simply” a cross-dressing masculine woman who would be more attracted to men than women, but she does not acknowledge the possibility of a same-sex relationship. In terms of speaking of sex and marriage, Moll uses the language of hegemonic heteronormativity because there is no other one available to her.

Similarly, non-normative individuals today are offered limited choices in the definition of their labels; ultimately, the labels fixate on a relationship between heteronormativity and non-normativity. An individual can identify as more or less masculine or feminine, but there is little room for a third gender expression. With the dichotomous pairs still in place, today’s individuals in search for their identity category (one presumably that they may choose for themselves) often see themselves employing restrictive and limiting language as a way to relate to the hegemony that oppresses them. One individual struggling with her “God-given” and socially prescribed categorical identity is Alexis, a college-aged male-to-female transsexual at the University of Illinois at Chicago.<sup>5</sup> In an interview with sex columnist Dan Savage on the May 1, 2012 episode of *Savage U*, Alexis reveals her crisis point with her identity in the language that she employs

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<sup>5</sup> Alexis describes herself to Dan Savage as “...a transgender person. I identify as female, but I was born biologically male. [...] I’ve been [transitioning] for two and a half years. Like, on hormones and things.” Although Alexis employs the term “transgender” to describe herself to Savage, I believe she is actually a “transsexual.” The definition is clarified in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. According to the *OED*, a transgender individual is someone whose “...identity does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these.” Under this definition, a “transgendered” individual is a person who believes his or her gender does not match his or her physical sex according to hegemonic heteronormativity (so, an effeminate male or a masculine female). The *OED* describes a “transsexual” as someone who has “...physical characteristics of one sex and psychological characteristics of the other.” A “transsexual” individual is a person who believes his or her body does not match his or her (often socially-prescribed) perception of his or her gender—a transsexual might be more likely to feel dissatisfaction with the disparity between gender and sex, sometimes relying on a form of therapeutic intervention (hormone or surgical, in most cases). To clarify, however, not all transsexuals have the support (either financial, educational, or emotional) to seek out or undergo these therapeutic interventions. Alexis, and those individuals like her, is fortunate that she is able to pursue hormone therapy in order to feel more aligned with what she believes is her true sex.

when she describes her interest in expressing femininity: "...being a transwoman, I'm always trying to bolster my own femininity. And, as women, you know, we feel like we can't be forward. We always have to be pursued. Like, I wanna feel cute and small and, like...hold-able, like portable. I wanna be, like, carried through the door and all that." Similarly to Moll Frith's dutiful and obedient wife, Alexis imagines femininity in specific, rigid, hegemonic terms. In order for Alexis to experience her femininity fully (to "bolster" it, as she says), she feels compelled to perform femininity according to heteronormative expectations and prescriptions. This femininity is traditional on the face of it; certainly there are other individuals who identify as feminine and do not express that femininity according to the terms Alexis uses. Perhaps it is because of her drive to separate herself from her biological maleness that Alexis goes to this extremely hegemonic view of femininity as one that is dependent upon and contrasted against masculinity. Likewise, Alexis's femininity is not grounded in her appearance—she does not describe a feminine woman as one who *looks* a particular way (aside from "small"). Much like Moll Frith's upholding of hegemonic heteronormativity, Alexis acknowledges her own agency in enacting her preferred gender expression, demonstrating her reliance upon socially-dictated and pre-scripted performances of femininity.<sup>6</sup>

Alexis's sense of performative agency ultimately underscores hegemonic heteronormativity; in spite of her non-normative identity, her pursuit to define it necessarily depends upon the vocabulary of the hegemony. The gender and sex categories themselves create points of crisis in all individuals who seek to answer the statement "I am," but this is particularly clarified in non-normative individuals. A struggle ensues between the identity and the

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<sup>6</sup> According to Butler in *Undoing Gender*, "If gender is performative, then it follows that the reality of gender is itself produced as an effect of the performance. Although there are norms that govern what will and will not be real, and what will and will not be intelligible, they are called into question and reiterated at the moment in which performativity begins its citational practice" (218). The sociosexual conventions, norms, and expectations imposed upon the individual may be impossible to historicize or declare as authentic by virtue of their performative nature.

vocabulary used to codify that identity into a clear and socially acceptable performance. The individual not only seeks to answer the question “who am I,” but now must also explore “*how* am I” and “*why* am I?” The answers may rely upon tautology in the beginning: “I am feminine/masculine, which I express this way because femininity/masculinity is always expressed this way.” Certainly as many individuals exist there also exist possible gender expressions and performances; but so absolute is hegemonic domination upon individuals that the enacting of all identities cannot rely upon any other categorical definitions than those that resignify heteronormative categories. Only through the creation of new terms and different categories, independent from those already established by hegemonic heteronormativity, will there be the possibility for avoiding crisis points in individual identity performance.

Identities shaped upon categories handed down or determined in relief against hegemonic terms will create deeper points of crisis for individuals. The “*why* am I” question will remain tautological and frustrating. The rigidity of categorical definitions must be softened, boundaries made permeable; individuals must demand the agency that belongs to subjects in order to find an authentic sense of self. The task is daunting as it relies upon universal agreement and a form of ubiquitous approval of new terminology and the rejection of rigidity. Many socioreligious structures, however, will not likely grant this approval because the belief systems rely too strongly upon categorical performances of identity in order to maintain clarity in defining the Other. In the act of performing one’s gender and sex identity (demonstrating the answer to “*who am I*”) relies upon terms predetermined by social ideology; an individual who embodies gender in a method that is not immediately recognizable to the observer risks outright categorization as an Other. Unless and until the terminology used by heteronormative hegemonic ideologues



breaks open in order to allow for all possible refractions of identity performance, there will always be an identity alienated by predetermined categories and an individual on the fringe.

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